



Deconstructing Sexual Harassment: An Analysis of Constructions  
of Unwanted Sexual Attention and (Un)resistance in Participant  
and Policy Accounts

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## **Abstract**

The term ‘sexual harassment’ has been treated as key to victim resistance against normalising constructions of unwanted sexual/gendered attention as ‘just sex’ and as a ‘trivial’ part of everyday life. The act of labelling unwanted conduct as sexual harassment has been constituted as an important political step in reframing normalised problematic conduct as gendered violence as well as legitimising recipient access to formalised routes of amelioration. However concerns have been raised that recipients, particularly women, are ‘reluctant’ to use the term ‘sexual harassment’ to describe their experiences and resist unwanted attention using laws and policies designed to deal with this issue.

Drawing on resources from discursive, postmodern and feminist approaches, this thesis explores how constructions of the term ‘sexual harassment’ and strategies to deal with it shape, enable and constrain resistances against gendered/sexualised power relations inscribed in manifestations of unwanted attention. It unpacks how discourses of sexual harassment polarise labelling and non-labelling behaviour to produce the former as an act of resistance and the latter as non-resistance. This project moves away from this polarisation to consider boundary construction around the issue of sexual harassment. Through discursive analysis of narratives identified through Q methodological analysis and constructions produced in interview data, this thesis examines the how both inclusion and exclusion of relevant issues in multiple understandings of sexual harassment and policy considerations impact challenges that can be made to unwanted conduct.

Central to this examination is critical consideration of the operation of gendered power relations within sexual harassment discourses. I pay particular attention to how various constructions of resistance within sexual harassment discourses become embedded in and re(produce) gendered binaries of dominance-subordination. This thesis considers how gendered binaries might be transgressed and destabilised by articulating alternative spaces for the performance of resistance.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### ***1.1 My Story***

My interest in sexual harassment began in the mid- to late-1990s amidst what appeared to me to be a public preoccupation with the issue. It seemed to be rarely out of the news – several high-profile sexual harassment complaints were brought to public attention and became a matter of debate. One which gained particular notoriety was the case against Bill Clinton where press interest reached fever pitch when he was alleged to have lied under oath about his sexual relationship with intern Monica Lewinsky. It was not just pending legal cases that were given airspace. Fictional cases of sexual harassment frequently featured in the story lines of popular TV shows such as *South Park* (1999) and *Ally McBeal* (1997 & 1998). The complexities of the issue of sexual harassment were also explored in films and books. For example, Michael Crichton's controversial book *Disclosure* (1993) that was subsequently released as a film (1994) tells the story of a man sexually harassed by his woman boss – a scenario differing from predominant understandings of sexual harassment as something that is done to women by men. Alongside these depictions which focused specifically on sexual harassment, I began to notice the more subtle references to the issue in the media, often in the form of one-off jokes.

What became apparent to me was how sexual harassment was variously 'sexed' up, made funny, or understood as a 'blip' in the dating process in media portrayals as well as by many of the people around me. During the time of the Clinton case, what I remember most clearly was the importance given to the lurid, salacious details of Clinton's relationship with Lewinsky, the jokes that were for some time told about sex acts which featured in the case. I remember the first time I watched the movie *Disclosure* and how a couple of male friends jovially pointed out that they would be happy to switch places with Michael Douglas, who played the victim of sexual harassment by woman boss Demi Moore. Above all else, I remember feeling genuinely puzzled about how sexual harassment could be understood as an expression of violence but at the same time somehow 'normal'.

As I began to research the topic for this project, I was often confronted with

descriptions of sexual harassment that were in many ways alien to me, that seemed very much at odds with popular portrayals of it. I was particularly struck by the significance given to the emergence of the term ‘sexual harassment’ in some accounts of its history. In such accounts, sexual harassment was often represented as problem, particularly for women. An issue that until relatively recently could not easily be described as a *problem* and had no clear ‘*solution*’ because this phenomenon had no name. For example, this can be seen in Mackinnon’s (1979) claim that:

“It is not surprising ... that women would not complain of an experience for which there has been no name ... lacking a term to express it, [workplace] sexual harassment was literally unspeakable, which made a generalised, shared and social definition of it inaccessible. The unnamed should not be mistaken for the nonexistent” (pp. 27-28).

Similarly, Thomas and Kitzinger (1995) contend that “Before the 1970s ... the label [sexual harassment] didn’t exist and the behaviour it identified was ‘just part of life’ – a problem without a name” (p. 32). Such descriptions of the problem of sexual harassment both resonated and diverged from my understandings of how it was commonly talked about. Whilst it seemed clear to me that unwanted sexual attention is a problem for many people, I did not know how or whether to reconcile this with the sense I’d gleaned from many ‘everyday’ accounts that the issue was somehow both a problem and part of ‘normal’ life. Where should I draw the line? How should I distinguish ‘good’ behaviour from ‘bad’ behaviour? Had people simply missed the point about sexual harassment? Was it really my place to tell them that?

The question of how to make sense of particular academic representations of sexual harassment became increasingly complex when I contextualised it in my own observations and experiences. More specifically, the ‘term’ sexual harassment is framed within a body of research as intended to cover an entire spectrum of problematic gendered/sexual behaviour, ranging from ‘routine’, mundane forms such as gendered/sexual jokes, leering, wolf-whistling, to more

extreme instances such as making job-related rewards contingent on sexual activity (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997; Lee, 2001; Hinze, 2004). However, I was increasingly aware that the term was not being used, at least by the people around me, to refer to 'routine' manifestations of unwanted sexual attention. Friends and acquaintances seemed all too aware of the problem of unwanted sexual attention – a trip to the local pubs and clubs were often euphemistically referred to as “a visit to the local meat-market”, we had code words for 'save me' if unwanted sexual attention got a little too much, we would glare, swear or leave in response to a range of problem behaviours – but we did not call them sexual harassment.

Not only did such observations prompt me to think about why the term might be used or not used in particular instances but also to question how it would, in practical terms, help to deal with scenarios in a variety of contexts such as those outlined above. At the beginning of this project, I noticed that research in the area has tended to focus predominantly on workplace sexual harassment, legal routes of amelioration and grievance processes in this context (see, for example, Mackinnon, 1979; Bingham, 1994; Williams, Guiffre and Dellinger, 1999; Paludi and Paludi, 2003; Dougherty 2006). However, it appeared that the question of how one might deal with sexual harassment became less clear outside of the organisational settings. Work which did discuss other forms of unwanted sexual attention such as street harassment did not seem to me to translate easily into practical steps for challenging behaviour encountered (Larkin, 1994; 1997; Mui & Murphy, 2002).

Indeed, some research left me with a sense of pessimism about what women in particular could do to challenge and prevent particular problematic experiences outside the workplace. For example, in her analysis of street harassment, Larkin (1997) draws attention to how unwanted sexual attention by men to women often sexually objectifies women, functioning to reduce the feminine body to a commodity for consumption through the male gaze. She argues that instances of unwanted sexual attention remind women about the possible threat of further sexual violence from men, how street harassment might escalate to more extreme behaviour and concludes:

“when a young woman is continually reminded of the risks that accompany her developing body, when she is constantly under scrutiny and surveillance, and when she lives in a state of constant vigilance, it’s unlikely she’ll ever develop a sense of herself as a powerful and autonomous person. Unlikely, too she’ll ever develop the strength to work against the process of her subordination” (p. 128).

Whilst, as will become apparent in this thesis, I found some of the theoretical ideas which emerged in such work useful in making sense of sexual harassment at various points in my exploration of it, I was nevertheless troubled by some descriptions of the subordinated woman depicted in accounts such as Larkin’s.

The positioning of women in relation to men within particular instances of unwanted sexual attention seemed to me to be much more complex than was captured by references to power differentials between men and women in some academic accounts. While I could see how, in the course of everyday life, feminine identities were often positioned as subordinate to masculine ones, I could also recount instances where women had directly challenged behaviours like street harassment. Some of these challenges drew more attention to gender inequality than others; some were more successful than others on particular occasions.

Alongside these issues, I struggled to make theoretical sense of stories which differed from the predominant representation in the literature of women as victims and men as perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention. Occasionally, I heard the stories of men where sexual attention from their woman partners, friends and/or colleagues were framed as unwanted, as not a joke, as something that needed to be stopped. However, there did not seem appear to be ‘room’ for these particular accounts in a large body of literature on the topic. As Lee (2000) points out the sexual harassment of heterosexual men by women or other men had not received a great deal of attention from scholars, largely because sexual harassment has been commonly conceptualised as a manifestation of male oppression of women. Women’s accounts of sexual harassment by other women more generally

appeared to be similarly marginalised (Brewis and Linstead, 2001). Such marginal accounts of unwanted sexual attention seemed to me to point to the complexities of gendered/sexualised power differentials between victims and perpetrators in sexual harassment scenarios.

These experiences of my initial engagement with sexual harassment as a topic for research frame the broad focus of this project. In this thesis, I explore the multiple ways in which the construct of ‘sexual harassment’ and strategies for dealing with it are socially defined, explained and constituted. Drawing on resources from feminist, postmodern and discursive approaches, I focus on how and why particular issues, debates and behaviours become relevant to or excluded from conceptualisations of sexual harassment. This includes a critical consideration of how problematisation of unwanted behaviour occurs in the absence of the term ‘sexual harassment’. The aim of this exploration is to unpack the implications that different ways of framing unwanted sexual attention as a problem have for recipients and initiators of it. I also explore the possibilities afforded by and limitations associated with particular strategies for dealing with sexual harassment, how particular contexts shape and constrain what can be done about it, as well as the possible consequences that using certain methods for dealing with it have for recipients. Before moving on to outline how these particular focuses and aims have been addressed in the following chapters, I will provide a broad discussion of core conceptualisations from the theoretical and methodological resources mentioned above which played a key role in shaping the direction of this thesis. More detailed discussion of these ideas is provided throughout.

## ***1.2 Discoursing Gender, Gendering Discourses***

The ideas, readings and analyses presented in this thesis are explicitly informed by the broad political commitment of feminism(s) to engage in analysing, challenging and transforming power relationships which maintain forms of gender inequality. As I alluded to above, sexual harassment has predominantly been seen in the literature as a means with which gender inequity is sustained, as a set of behaviours in which men can subordinate women. However, in this project, I

wished to deviate from the predominant way in which sexual harassment is commonly understood and researched; instead, I wanted to explore and unpack a range of gendered/sexualised power relations. I wanted to focus not only on instances of male sexual harassment against women but also on women-men and same-sex initiators/recipients. What I found to be particularly useful for this purpose was insights from postmodern feminist work around gender and sexualities.

Broadly speaking, such work challenges essentialist notions of gender difference, of fixed and stable genders, and gendered identities. Gender and gender identity is not simply understood as determined by the biological features and process of our bodies, nor do they map on to the physical body in a one-to-one fashion (e.g. Nicolson, 1990; Crawford, 1995; Butler, 1990; 1993; Gardiner, 2002). Instead, the gender identities that become available to us are seen as fluid, shifting, fragmented and contested. Rather than arising intrinsically from us, gendered identities can be thought of as ‘performatively’ (re)produced and (re)constituted in our social practices and relationships, in situated and local contexts (Butler, 1990).

In this project, Butler’s (1990, 1993) work on the heterosexual matrix has been drawn on to articulate the ways in which normative gendered identities and positionings are inextricably tied to predominant notions of heterosexuality. More specifically, Butler (1990) uses the term heterosexual matrix to:

“designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized ... a hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (p. 151)

The presumption of heterosexuality embedded with normative notions of femininities and masculinities is integral to notions around what is permissible

for each gender. However, ‘deviations’ from normative gendered ways of being throw into doubt compulsory heterosexuality and highlights its instability. The heterosexual matrix is maintained through the policing and punishment of those who deviate from compulsory heterosexuality and become marked as other.

Such conceptualisations present a challenge to universalised gendered/sexualised dichotomies of men and women, of masculinity and femininity, of clear and fixed patterns of gendered dominance and subordination. Indeed, the binary of powerful/powerless becomes increasingly difficult to maintain in a straightforward or rigid manner when the intersection of gender with other positions and identities, such as those around race, class, disability and other points of difference, is considered (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996; Gardiner, 2002; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran and Vieten, 2006). Using such theorisations of gender/sexualities, it is possible to make sense of a range of gendered/sexualised configurations of victim-perpetrator relations mentioned above. More specifically, conceptualising gender as unstable, shifting, variously intertwined with various forms of power, makes possible understandings of men as not always powerful and women as not always powerless.

The move away from notions of enduring ‘truths’ about gender in general and sexual harassment in particular to local and situated knowledges of these broad constructs underpins this research. Central to this approach to research has been insights from discursive analytic traditions. As is discussed at various points throughout this thesis (and in particular detail in chapter 5), this project treats sexual harassment as a discursively (re)produced construct, shaped by and situated in particular social, political and historical contexts. Some accounts of the history of sexual harassment described earlier allude to sexual harassment as pre-existing the definition of it, as having some sort of objective existence prior to its ‘discovery’. In contrast, this project takes as its starting point the construct of sexual harassment as produced and reproduced in and through discourses. This is not to say that problematic, unwanted gendered/sexualised behaviours did not exist prior to the circulation of the term ‘sexual harassment’. Rather, this thesis begins with the consideration of how *sexual harassment as a phenomenon*

becomes discursively (re)produced. From within this framework, it is possible to move away from issues around the ‘truth’ of particular versions of sexual harassment, of what sexual harassment ‘is’ and how we should ‘solve’ it. Instead, it becomes possible to focus on the possibilities and constraints (re)produced by particular constructions of sexual harassment for challenging problematic gendered behaviour and gendered inequalities.

### ***1.3 Chapter Outline***

The broad theoretical ideas described above from various strands of feminist theory and discourse analytic approaches provide the backdrop for this research and are webbed through the chapters in this thesis. The following overview of the organisation of this thesis will provide a sense of how the theoretical and methodological approaches outlined above shaped the overall project.

In Chapter 2, I explore broad scholarly concerns centring on the reluctance of individuals, particularly women, to contextualise their experiences as sexual harassment. I discuss how these concerns are embedded within the construction of the term ‘sexual harassment’ as a tool for resisting gendered subordination and how the absence of the term in accounts often becomes interpreted as suggesting that unwanted behaviour is going unchallenged, being normalised or both. I present a re-reading of some such interpretations and consider how the problematisation of unwanted behaviours may occur in the absence of the label ‘sexual harassment’. I also argue that the predominant focus on the issue of non-labelling has functioned to distract attention away from the ways in which the label is used to describe behaviours and experiences. Running through this chapter, I critically consider how the focus on women’s non-labelling specifically can work to (re)produce potentially problematic versions of femininities.

In Chapter 3, I move on to consider strategies for dealing with sexual harassment in the form of discrimination laws and policy. I explore how particular strategies become limited and constrained by particular constructions of masculinities and femininities which variously frame key assumptions within these formalised routes of amelioration. I discuss how gendered constructions operating in laws



and policies may act as a barrier to their use. I also discuss other barriers to reporting such as the possibility of secondary victimisation.

Taken together, Chapters 2 and 3 provide the backdrop for the aforementioned broad aims of this project. However before moving to the specific analytical focuses of this thesis, I attempt to outline key theoretical, methodological and reflective considerations which guided the development of knowledge production in this thesis.

Chapter 4 describes the location of this project within the broader institution of psychology. More specifically, I outline the ways in which this project, as a feminist and qualitative informed piece of research on what could be described as a sensitive project, is positioned as marginal in relation to mainstream psychology. I discuss how this project's marginal position means that the issues and concerns around the process of doing such research are also marginalised within, for example, advice on conducting ethical work. In this chapter, I provide a reflexive account of pertinent issues that shaped the production of this thesis. This account includes critical reflection on how my own assumptions around gender and sexualities, specific gendered/sexualised positionings in which I am variously located impacted my relationships with my participants.

In Chapter 5, I go on to provide an account of the methodologies employed in this project. I begin by outlining the rationale for the use of Q methodology in this thesis and provide a description of the methodological features of the two Q studies carried out as part of this project. I then move to the rationale for using Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore patterns in the interview data collected as well as including a description of procedural aspects of the interview study. This chapter ends with a discussion of how ethical issues raised by all three studies were addressed.

The analytical chapters of this thesis begin with Chapter 6. Here, I explore narratives identified using Q methodology which centre on the question of what constitutes sexual harassment. I explore the ways in which issues and behaviours become relevant to or excluded from narratives of sexual harassment. I explore

the implications of the inclusion or exclusion of particular issues from specific narratives of sexual harassment, as well as the ways in which narratives identified enable or constrain challenges to be made to unwanted behaviour.

Chapter 7 continues with the focus on boundary construction by examining the ways in which the public-private dichotomy is discursively deployed within interview data to construct sexual harassment as impermissible in formalised public spaces and relationships but as both permissible *and* a problem in personal informal relationships. I discuss how strategies for dealing with it are constructed as more problematic in the private sphere than in public, formalised spaces.

Specific attention is paid in Chapter 8 to dealing with sexual harassment. I provide an interpretation of policy narratives identified in the second Q methodological study conducted. Of particular importance to my interpretation of these narratives is the issue of secondary victimisation which has been argued to be a significant barrier to lodging complaints against problematic behaviour. I examine these narratives with a view to articulating the barriers they might present to those faced with dealing with sexual harassment, paying particular attention to how certain narratives open up the possibilities for secondary victimisation.

Chapter 9 explores how heterosexualised gendered relations become interwoven in constructions of victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment. Discursive analysis of the interview data highlighted how women victims/male perpetrators, women offenders/male victims, and same-sex victims/perpetrators become constructed through a heterosexualised gaze. Constructions of victim-perpetrator relations in both heterosexual and same-sex sexual harassment (re)produce versions of heterosexualised femininities as passive/powerless and heterosexualised masculinities as active/powerful. I unpack how these normative gendered positionings of active and passive can work to support and maintain the conditions under which more extreme gendered power relationships of dominance-subordination are made possible.

I conclude in Chapter 10 by drawing together the main theoretical, methodological and practical implications of this thesis. I end by making

suggestions for how particular problematic gendered patterns identified in this thesis that appear to maintain the phenomenon of sexual harassment may be challenged and undermined.

## **Chapter 2: Constructing Sexual Harassment: Gendered Power and (Un)resistance**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, key issues and debates within the field of sexual harassment will be described and explored. In doing so, I will delineate the ways in which gender, sex and power become constituted within theorisations of sexual harassment. The purpose of this exploration is to highlight the ways in which the term ‘sexual harassment’ becomes coupled with notions of resistance. Of particular importance to this examination are the ways in which women in particular become framed as agents of this form of resistance as well as victims of sexual harassment through labelling their experiences as ‘sexual harassment’. More specifically, I will unpack how these particular positionings of women enable or disable challenges to be made against this form of sexual violence. This chapter begins by describing the ways in which the term ‘sexual harassment’ has been treated as integral to victim resistance. I will then discuss how the construct of sexual harassment has been framed and constituted within key strands of work within the field. Lastly, I will discuss the issue of women recipient non-labelling of experiences as ‘sexual harassment’.

### **2.2 Sexual Harassment as a Social Problem**

The recognition of sexual harassment as a significant social problem has been attributed to women activist groups in the 1970s. Mackinnon (1979) credits the Working Women United Institute with coining the term ‘sexual harassment’ to describe a pattern of unwanted gendered/sexual conduct described in women’s accounts of their employment experiences. The coining of the term marked a reframing of unwanted gendered/sexual harassment which, up until the 1970s, had been routinely trivialised in social/political discourses as ‘just sex’. For example, sexual harassment has often been constructed as the product of men’s natural drive for sex and as a ‘natural’ problem in sexual encounters which functions to normalise manifestations of sexual harassment (Mackinnon, 1979; Tangri, Burt and Johnson, 1982; Talbot, 1997; Crouch, 2001; Kurth, Spiller and Brown Travis, 2001; Samuels, 2003). Thus, the advent of the term ‘sexual harassment’ has been seen as a critical step in repositioning a range of normalised behaviours as sexual

violence.

The emergence of the term is often described as part of a broader shift in academic, activist and public focus from more extreme forms of gendered/sexual violence such as rape, to a broader spectrum of *unwanted* behaviours which variously impact individuals – particularly women – in the course of their everyday lives (Kitzinger and Thomas, 1997). For example, conduct variously described under the rubric of sexual harassment have included a wide range of acts, such as leering, ogling, wolf-whistling, sexism(s), gendered/sexualised comments, physical touching, sexual bribery and/or coercion, to name but a few (Fitzgerald, et al, 1988; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1994; 1997; Crouch 2001). Whilst there is no universally-agreed definition of sexual harassment, common to predominant definitions is the representation of it as any *unwanted* behaviour that is *sexualised* and/or *gendered*.

The construction of sexual harassment as a form of violence drew attention to how the phenomenon is firmly embedded within relations of gendered power. Drawing on notions of patriarchy, the predominant pattern of women as victims and men as perpetrators of sexual harassment became theorised within a body of literature as a manifestation of a wider system of gender inequality in which men dominate women (MacKinnon, 1979; Wise and Stanley, 1987; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1994; 1997; Superson, 2001; Timmerman, 2005). Following a similar trajectory to feminist theorisations of rape, the positioning of sexual harassment as inextricably linked to power gave rise to debates over whether sexual harassment is used by men to dominate women in order to gain sex, or whether sex is used to maintain gendered power. These debates point to the complexities of making sense of how gender, sex and power become interwoven within expressions of sexual harassment. However, I would argue that the distinction between these two positions has been somewhat overstated in relation to descriptions of some early theorisations of this issue. For example, MacKinnon's (1979) ground-breaking work on sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination has been located by some scholars in the former camp described above (Lee, 2001; Roscigno, 2007). The basis for this claim appears to lie in MacKinnon's predominant focus on *quid*

*pro quo* harassment in the workplace which involves giving rewards or the withholding of punishment in exchange for sexual activity. However, Mackinnon's analysis does not simply state that men use power so as to obtain sex. Rather, Mackinnon points to how relations of masculine dominance and feminine subordination are imbued within normative heterosexual practices. Similarly, as Gavey (2005) points out in relation to rape, the claim that unwanted sex acts are about power rather than sex within much feminist work in the area has been closely tied to the examination of power dynamics operating within heterosexuality. This claim, I would argue, is also true of much work on sexual harassment.

This is not to say that I am arguing that analyses of power within the field of sexual violence in general and sexual harassment in particular have been uniformly unproblematic. For example, particular notions of patriarchy have been used to construct relations of dominance-subordination within sexual harassment as a form of sovereign power (e.g. MacKinnon, 1979; Superson, 1993, 2001). As Reavey and Warner (2001) argue, the focus on patriarchy as a form of sovereign power within the sexual violence literature does not account for the ways in which power can work to (re)produce particular versions of sexual violence and gendered subjectivities therein. Nor does it focus on the subtle shifts and movements within power relations in which men and women are embedded (see also Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 for a discussion of power). However, such limitations of this work should not distract attention from the ways in which these theorisations of gendered power dynamics placed the issue of sexual harassment firmly on the political agenda. The analysis of accounts of unwanted sexual/gendered attention, particularly those of women's experiences of victimisation by men in the workplace, provided the basis for the conceptualisation of sexual harassment as a form of workplace sex discrimination (MacKinnon, 1979; see also Chapter 3), and laid the ground for a plethora of research focused on the theorisation of the sexual harassment of women by men in employment contexts.

Underpinning a large body of work within this field are the ways in which

workplace organisation (re)produces opportunities for the manifestation of gender inequalities which predominately work to position women as subordinate to men. For example, it has been argued that the dominance of men in this context is reflected in, and perpetuated by, the horizontal segregation of women and vertical stratification of employment positions (e.g. Blackman, Brown, Brooks and Jarman, 2003). Vertical stratification refers to a typical employment pattern in which women are largely employed in lower ranking positions to men within the workplace hierarchy. Horizontal segregation refers to the employment of women in predominately feminised jobs such as nurses, child-minders and so on. Such jobs often prioritise ‘feminine characteristics’ such as care, communication and nurturance (MacKinnon, 1979; Hearn and Parkin, 2001). This kind of work has generally been constructed as ‘women’s work’ which has often been less valued than masculinised professions. Such feminised characteristics are often constructed as at odds with masculinised professions where highly masculinised ‘traits’ such as individualism, aggression and competition are equated with employee productivity and success in particular workplace cultures (e.g. Cockburn, 1991; Hearn and Parkin, 2001). Thus, in this context, the feminine becomes marginalised and subordinated (Ball, 2004).

Broadly speaking, the ways in which organisational power relations become infused with gendered/sexualised ones has been conceptualised as creating the conditions under which sexual harassment is made possible (MacKinnon, 1979; Wise and Stanley, 1987; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1994; 1997; Superson, 2001; Timmerman, 2005). Thus, the workings of organisational and gendered/sexualised power have been a central focus in sexual harassment research. To explore this point more fully, the following section will review key areas of research. I will begin by discussing mainstream psychological research before moving to insights from organisational theories variously influenced by sociological, postmodern and feminist strands of thought.

### **2.3     *Workplace Sexual Harassment: Gender, Sex & Power***

Within some strands of mainstream psychology, gendered and organisational power relations operating within and framing manifestations of sexual harassment

have been conceptualised from within an individualistic framework. More specifically, a body of research has focused on identifying problematic gendered beliefs and attitudes, which predispose individuals to exploit power derived from greater hierarchical job status for the purpose of sexually harassing a person or persons in a subordinate employment positions. The *Likelihood to Sexually Harass* (LSH) scale, developed by Pryor (1987), has been highly influential in the investigation of individual attributes associated with the proclivity towards workplace sexual harassment. The LSH scale comprises of 10 hypothetical scenarios in which participants are asked to imagine themselves as having the organisational power to reward or punish a woman employee in various professional settings. Participants are then asked to rate the likelihood that they would use their greater power to exploit the woman employee sexually, if there was no risk of negative consequences for sexual harassment. The hypothetical scenarios focus on *quid pro quo* harassment which involves the exchange of employment-related rewards or the withholding of punishment in return for sexual activity (Mackinnon, 1979). It should be noted that the actual term 'sexual harassment' is not explicitly used in this scale. A number of researchers have argued that men who gained a high LSH score also scored highly on measures of adversarial sexual beliefs (i.e., the belief that men and women's relationships are antagonistic), acceptance of rape myths (i.e., the belief that women like, deserve, or seek to be raped), tolerance for sexual harassment, endorsement of traditional male sex-role stereotypes, and likelihood to rape (Pryor, 1987; Pryor and Stoller, 1994; Bargh, Raymond, Pryor and Strack, 1995; Driscoll, Kelly and Henderson, 1998; Woodzicka LaFrance, 2005).

More recently, researchers have explored whether high LSH scores are associated with particular personality traits (e.g. Pryor and Meyers, 2000; Bennett and Robinson, 2000 ). For example, Lee, Gizzarone and Ashton (2003) argued that the personality dimension of honesty-humility is correlated with scores from the LSH scale. According to Lee, Gizzarone and Ashton (2003), the honesty-humility dimension is defined by adjectives that suggest sincerity and trustworthiness versus deceit, greed, and conceit. High scores on this personality dimension suggest that an individual is sincere, trustworthy and is reluctant to exploit others



for personal gain whereas low scores indicate that an individual is deceitful, greedy, conceited and exploitative of others. For Lee, Gizzarone and Ashton (2003), the honesty-humility dimension is strongly and negatively correlated with questionnaire measures of exploitative-related traits such as primary psychopathy and Machiavellianism. They argue that in their study there was a negative correlation between LSH scores and scores on the honesty-humility measure which in this study is interpreted as indicating that those with exploitative personality traits are more likely to engage in sexual harassment. Lee, Gizzarone and Ashton (2003) conclude that such personality measures might be usefully deployed in the making of administrative decisions around the management of workplace sexual harassment. They suggest that once individuals with a predisposition to sexually harass have been identified, this information can be then be used to locate such individuals within working contexts considered 'low risk' for sexual harassment, such as those working units with low levels of such complaints.

One difficulty arising from Lee, Gizzarone and Ashton (2003) study and indeed within this body of work in general, is the assumption that actual sexual harassment can be predicted from self-reported proclivities. As Gavey (2005) points out, a frequent criticism of self-reported tendencies to sexual/gendered violence is that is that this does not automatically translate into actual expression of sexually aggressive behaviour. Thus, the claim that sexual harassment can be predicted by self-reported propensity to harass is tenuous.

The general implication of this body of work is that it is possible to identify a certain 'type' of individual who engages in sexual harassment. The negative connotations associated with this representation of the 'sexual harasser' positions this 'type of man' as deviant which serves to distance them from 'ordinary' men who do not engage in such conduct. The construction of the sexual harasser as deviant also positions the individual harasser as non-normative which functions to rarefy such conduct. Indeed, as Thomas (1997) points out, what further functions to rarefy sexual harassment is the focus on more extreme forms of it. As discussed earlier the LSH scale describes explicit and intentional sexual exploitation and

coercion. Thomas (1997) argues that the focus on such extreme manifestations works to divert attention away from less extreme, routine instances of sexual harassment. Thomas (1997) suggests that individualistic accounts that focus exclusively on 'extreme' forms of problematic conduct are unhelpful in terms of theorising 'less dramatic instances of the phenomenon. This is because these 'less dramatic' instances appear to be expressed with relative frequency in the course of everyday life by 'ordinary' individuals, particularly men. In addition to this, the focus on sexual harassment as an individual problem or pathology can also distract attention away from the ways in which wider systems of organisational/gendered power can give rise to sexual harassment – in research working within more individualistic frameworks, it is the individuals misuse of gendered and/or organisational power which is framed as the problem rather than organisational/gendered structures *per se*.

Consideration of such limitations of individualistic explanations of sexual harassment have turned attention to the theorisation of gendered roles and composition of occupational roles as a basis for sexually harassing behaviour. One such theory which has gained considerable popularity in the literature is Gutek's sex-role spillover thesis. For Gutek (1985), sex-role spillover can be defined as "the carryover into the workplace of gender-based expectations that are irrelevant or inappropriate to work" (p. 17). More specifically, Gutek (1985) argues that spillover occurs when women are expected to behave in stereotypically feminine ways despite this not being an official requirement of particular employments. Sexual harassment may occur when a woman's role as a sexual object spills over into the employment setting. As Gutek and Morasch (1982) argue:

"when women are propositioned by men at work, touched sexually or made the object of sexual comments or gestures, that is an indication of a spillover of sex-role expectations and behaviour into the work-role" (pp. 58-59).

It has been argued that sex-role spillover is more likely to manifest in two kinds of employment contexts. Firstly, a woman employed in a traditionally masculinised job may experience spillover because her gender becomes perceptually

prominent. In this case, according to Gutek (1985), it is likely that the woman employee's status as woman will be prioritised over her working role. Secondly, women working in traditionally-defined 'woman's jobs' are also likely to experience spillover because the job itself is feminised.

Whilst sex-role spillover theory has amassed considerable support from a body of experimental studies (e.g. Gutek and Cohen, 1987; Ragins and Scandura, 1995; Burgess and Borgida, 1997), it is not without problems. As Mott and Condor (1997) point out, within this theory, the notion of traditional sex-roles becomes problematised only when it spills over into the formalised, public sphere of the workplace. The theory does not problematise traditional gendered roles for men and women more generally. Indeed, the phrase sex-role *spillover* appears to tacitly imply that gendered roles may well be legitimate in contexts unrelated to work. Mott and Condor (1997) argue that sex-role spillover theory appears to draw on notions of the workplace as a public domain which is distinguishable and separable from the private sphere. In this way sex-role spillover theory can be seen as legitimising and (re)producing the public/private distinction (Samuels, 2003).

The public/private dichotomy and its conflation with masculine and feminine dualisms respectively have been conceptualised as central to traditional gendered divisions of labour. More specifically, it has long been argued that traditional understandings of wage labour as a male preserve have historically acted as an exclusionary mechanism against women's participation in the workplace as well as preventing women from reaching higher positions within employment hierarchies (Mackinnon, 1979; Nicolson, 1997; Hearn and Parkin, 2001). The privileging of the masculine in this context has been broadly argued to reflect, (re)produce and maintain a wider system of gender inequalities in which men subordinate women. The phenomenon of workplace sexual harassment has been interpreted within some feminist theorisations as a means by which male dominance over women can be asserted and maintained in the workplace (e.g. Cockburn, 1991). Indeed, the public/private distinction has functioned to support the manifestation of unwanted gendered/sexualised behaviour on the job. As

Baker (2007) points out, women have often been denied legal recourse for sexual harassment because such behaviour has been deemed a 'private' concern or 'personal' dispute. The troubling of the public/private dichotomy within feminist theory provided the basis for the phenomenon of sexual harassment to be recognised as not simply personal but also as political. More specifically, a number of feminist theorists have drawn attention to the ways in which sexual harassment is not 'just' a private interaction between individuals but a (power) relation embedded within social, historical and political contexts that shape and structure gendered/sexualised relationships (e.g. Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997; Hinze, 2004; Baker, 2007).

The unsettling of boundaries between the public and private is reflected in arguments that the workings of organisations are thoroughly gendered and sexualised. As Brewis and Linstead (2000) note, gender/sexualities variously impact, shape and constrain the jobs people have and perform, employee relationships, the language used and spatial arrangements. Drawing on postmodern insights on gender, sex and organisational culture, a body of work has argued that workplaces are predominantly masculinised spaces in which masculinised 'characteristics' and identities such as individualism, rationality and competition are valued and prioritised. Hearn and Parkin (2001) argue that the prioritisation of the masculine within organisational discourse is reflected in metaphorical and literal references to gender and sexuality. They point to how organisational discourse draws on notions of heterosexuality in which 'proper' masculine sexuality is positioned as dominant and active and 'proper' feminine sexuality is positioned as subordinate and passive. As an example, Hearn and Parkin (2001) point to how terms such as '*penetrating*' markets are used in business discourses and how in particular organisations, such as the military, male workers are encouraged to be more 'masculine' through a range of practices in which those who fall short of 'proper' masculinity are positioned as "poofs" or "women" (p. 50).

More recently, there has been a shift within some organisations to work practices which have become gendered as feminine. This includes those which attempt to

move away from masculine individualism and hierarchical stratification to those which emphasis team-working, delegated decision-making and individual empowerment (Benschop and Doorewaard, 1998; Metcalfe and Linstead, 2003). However, the deployment of feminised working strategies has variously been met with resistance by employees and/or has been re-located and embedded within masculinised social practices (Sheppard and Pringle, 2004). According to Ball (2004), the re-appropriation of feminised ways of doing work within normative masculinised organisational practices has functioned to reinforce rather than challenge traditional gendered orderings and structures within the workplace setting.

How heterosexualised masculine ways of being become interwoven, prioritised and maintained within organisational culture opens up spaces within which sexual harassment is made possible. Sexual harassment is predominantly understood as working as a mechanism for the continued dominance of masculinity over femininity in the workplace and this is reflected in the typical expression of it as a gendered relation, as something that men do to women (Hearn and Parkin, 2001, 2005; Stockdale, 2005). For example, sexual harassment has been described as a means for individuals – particularly men – to assert masculinised identities at work. More specifically, the feminisation/sexualisation of women through sexually harassing behaviours works to distance the harasser from the feminine which has traditionally been seen as the antithesis to organisational life. Sexual harassment can also work to undermine women's professional identities by drawing attention in various ways to their subordinate positioning in the gendered work hierarchy so that they come to be seen as women, feminine and sexualised bodies rather than workers (Nicolson, 1996).

#### **2.4     *Sexual harassment as an adult, workplace relation***

Common to the literature outlined above is the coupling of the phenomenon of sexual harassment with working life. Indeed, whilst some research briefly notes that sexual harassment can occur in a number of contexts, it has nevertheless become inextricably intertwined with employment. The reification of sexual harassment as a workplace phenomenon has served to marginalise the study of it

outside this setting. As Fairchild and Rudman (2008) point out, this is demonstrated in the ways in which the sexual harassment of women by men in public places other than the workplace has been largely ignored in the social science literature. For Larkin (1997), the minimal attention paid to sexual harassment outside the work setting may function to downplay the occurrence of it in other spheres of women's lives.

As well as being predominantly constituted as a workplace phenomenon, sexual harassment is typically positioned as an adult relation. As alluded to above, the body of work on sexual harassment tends to focus on adult employees. When young people's experiences of sexual harassment have been researched, it is adolescents rather than children that are focused on. In addition to this, adolescent and childhood experiences of sexual harassment have often been subsumed under the rubric of bullying. The problem with the absorption of sexual harassment within broader bullying discourses is the ways in which bullying literature more generally has tended to ignore how gender and sexualities shape incidents of harassment (Renolds, 2002). Johnson and Epstein (1998) argue that the lack of analysis of problematic, harassing gendered/sexualised behaviour between children reflects and (re)produces discourses of childhood innocence.

In its predominant construction as an adult interaction, sexual harassment is also constructed as a specific kind of gendered relation – as something that men do to women. As Brewis and Linstead (2000) point out “the use of the female third person pronoun when referring to recipients of sexual harassment is so widespread in ... [sexual harassment] discourse as to almost escape detection” (p. 86). The same could also be said in relation to the use of the male third person pronoun to refer to initiators of sexual harassment within the literature. Indeed, some research claims imply that men cannot be sexually harassed. For example, Herbert (1992) maintains that men cannot be sexually harassed as men in general tend to have both institutional and personal power over women which, for Herbert, are preconditions to the manifestation of such behaviour. In contrast to Herbert, whilst many studies acknowledge that men can be sexually harassed, the focus generally remains on the sexual harassment of women by men. Lee (2000)

suggests that the focus on this particular gendered relation within much of the sexual harassment literature is embedded within the conceptualisation of sexual harassment as a power relation within which women are subjugated by men. Some studies have begun to explore the sexual harassment of men by drawing attention to the ways in which sexual harassment is used to regulate and police gendered/sexualised identities. Underpinning such work is theorisations of gendered/sexualised identities as inextricably connected to predominant notions of heterosexuality in which notions of normative femininities and masculinities are presumed to be heterosexual (see also Chapter 1). Within such work, sexual harassment of women/girls by men/boys has been conceptualised as a key site for the constitution of heterosexualised masculine identities. In a similar vein, it has been argued that sexual harassment can be used by both men/boys and women/girls to subordinate othered men/boys who do not embody hegemonic heterosexualised forms of femininity and masculinity (Epstein, 1997; Renolds, 2002). Whilst such insights point to how sexual harassment is a key tool in the (re)production and regulation of gendered/sexualised identities, research specifically focusing on 'non-typical' gender configurations of victim-perpetrator relations remains a marginalised area of study.

The construction of sexual harassment as a workplace phenomenon and as an adult relation in which men are the initiators and women are the recipients is webbed through a specific body of work focusing on a core concern within the literature: recipient non-labelling of experiences as sexual harassment. As mentioned above, the use of the term sexual harassment has not only been viewed as important because it enables women to trouble a variety of incidents but because it allows a specific kind of problematisation to take place. More specifically, a number of researchers have argued that the term 'sexual harassment' draws attention to the ways in which manifestations of sexual harassment are gendered and subordinating (e.g. Wise and Staney, 1987; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1995; 1997; Lee, 2001; Dougherty, 2006). The phenomenon of non-labelling has raised concerns that sexual harassment is being normalised and/or otherwise going unchallenged. These concerns have given rise to a growing body of research attempting to explain why non-labelling might occur. It

is this body of research which will be explored in the following sections.

### **2.5 *Feminising the Other: Professional identities***

As mentioned above, sexual harassment has been argued to work as a tool for undermining women's professional credibility by locating women as feminised/sexualised beings which minimises their status as worker. Whilst the term 'sexual harassment' has been positioned as a means to challenge such expressions of gender inequality, it has been argued that non-labelling of experiences as sexual harassment variously functions as a way for women to stake claim to a professional identity within masculinist organisational cultures (Mumby and Clair, 1997).

This can be seen in Mott and Condor (1997) which focused on constructions of sexual harassment in accounts by women secretaries. More specifically, participants in this study described instances where their position as woman-secretary was treated as inferior to their male co-workers. This was demonstrated in their positioning as primarily responsible for domestic tasks such as tea-making and/or their positioning as an irrational sexual object in which they were treated as 'dolly birds', 'bimbos' and as something for men to 'look at' (p. 66). However, Mott and Condor suggest that these secretaries were reluctant to label these behaviours 'sexual harassment'. Instead, such behaviours were dismissed as harmless because such comments were located as part of a humorous exchange with colleagues. This reluctance was bound up with constructions of the secretary as an equal work colleague and understandings of the ideal colleague. More specifically, constructions of workplace equality allowed women secretaries to situate themselves as an active equal participant rather than the passive object of male humour and sexualised fantasy and as such allows sexually harassing behaviour to be dismissed as 'harmless'. Moreover, joviality was constructed in these accounts as an important characteristic of the ideal colleague and team member. Thus, Mott and Condor argue that secretaries who wanted to be treated as a full member of the working team cannot afford to be excluded from such workplace banter. However, the descriptions of sexual joking in this study appear to position women as inferior. This can be seen not only in the ways in which



women secretaries are positioned as the object of sexual banter but also in gendered dynamics of such interaction in which men are positioned as active joke tellers and women are the passive recipients of such jokes, that is, the men joke and the women laugh. For Mott and Condor, the acceptance and engagement with such humour as a means of maintaining or asserting status of equal colleague may be problematic because such banter can serve to reproduce and maintain images of the woman secretary as sexual object.

Women entering traditionally masculine professions also have to work at having their status as equal colleague accepted. This is demonstrated in Hinze's (2006) work on the ways in which the medical profession as a traditionally masculinist arena impacts and shapes doctors' understandings of their experiences of sexual harassment. Hinze argues that women physicians who experience a range of gendered behaviour such as unwanted physical touching, sexist remarks and suggestive comments come to doubt their initial feelings of discomfort with the behaviour and question whether they are overreacting or being oversensitive. Rejection of the label 'sexual harassment' by these women doctors arose out of concerns that oversensitivity is the antithesis of constructions of the 'good doctor' which emphasise logic, objectivity and rationality. Thus by avoiding the framing of these experiences as sexual harassment, women were able to lay claim to an acceptable professional identity in this context.

For Nicolson (1997), the socialisation of women doctors into the patriarchal culture of medicine has profound implications for the ways in which sexual harassment is viewed by those women who have broken through the glass ceiling into senior positions within the profession. She suggests that senior women were less aware of sexual harassment of other women doctors compared to more junior women staff and only paid attention to it if they were on the receiving end of it. As women gained more senior positions in the professional hierarchy they not only reject the label 'sexual harassment' to describe experiences but also dismiss problematic gendered behaviour as easily dealt with (see also Quinn, 2000; Nicolson, 1997). Nicolson (1997) argues that the framing of sexual harassment as easily dealt with suggests that these senior women have learnt to cope with such

behaviour. This coping strategy positions senior women as competent because they can successfully handle such incidents. This serves to distinguish senior women from other 'incompetent' women who cannot cope with such behaviour. However, Nicholson concludes that by privileging their professional identity over their identity as a woman, senior women fail to engage and maintain the ways in which the medical profession continues to position them as 'other'.

## **2.6     *Locating blame***

As well as contributing to the negotiation and management of professional identities, women's non-labelling has also been attributed to the issue of blame. According to Harned (2005), some women explicitly reject labels such as 'sexual harassment' or 'sexual abuse' because they feel at least partially culpable for their experiences of 'unwanted sexual attention'. More specifically, Harned (2005) argues that some women did not feel that their experiences constituted a form of gendered/sexualised violence because they felt that they had "led the guy on" or "felt like a tease" (p. 396). Thus, it would appear that some women interpret their behaviour in some contexts as 'provocative' of men's actions which positions the woman recipient as accountable and/or responsible for incidents of unwanted sexual attention.

A plethora of experimental research has suggested that the endorsement of particular sexist attitudes by some women recipients may explain why they see themselves as provocative of unwanted sexual attention from men. It has been argued that such sexist attitudes are based on stereotypical beliefs about gender appropriate behaviour in sexual relationships (see, for example, Adams, Kottke and Padgiit, 1983; Baker, Terpstra and Larntz, 1990; Walker, Rowe and Quinsey, 1993). These stereotypical beliefs include the idea that it is a male prerogative to initiate sexual behaviour and to use pressure to gain sex with women (e.g. Gutek and O'Connor, 1995; De Judicibus and McCabe, 2001). Particular myths, where women provoke sexual harassment by misleading men into believing that they are interested in having sex, are also a feature of such sexist attitudes (e.g. Gutek and O'Connor, 1995; Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita and Russo, 1994; Judicibus and McCabe, 2001). According to Jensen and Gutek (1982), women

recipients who hold such sexist beliefs are more likely to blame themselves and place responsibility on ‘victims’ more generally for their experiences of sexual harassment compared to women who held ‘feminist’ beliefs. Similarly, other studies have suggested that both men and women with sexist beliefs tend to place blame on the recipient for ‘provoking’ sexually harassing behaviour (e.g., De Judicibus and McCabe, 2001).

Some studies have also claimed that there are particular psychological features of women who engage in victim-blaming behaviour. For example, Cowan (2000) argues that the women in her study who engaged in victim-blaming behaviour “appear to have a predisposition to dislike and distrust women” and are generally ‘hostile’ to women as a group (p. 244). Cowan (2000) further claims that some women’s hostility to other women is rooted in personal factors rather than political commitments. That is, women’s hostility towards other women is associated with low self-esteem and low levels of happiness and satisfaction with their own lives (see also, Cowan, Neighbours, Delamoreaux and Behnke, 1998). For Cowan (2000), such women are problematic because by blaming the woman victim and exonerating men perpetrators they are legitimising gendered violence and thus participating in the maintenance of such acts. Here, women who exhibit victim blaming behaviours are explicitly labelled as ‘hostile’ and lacking ‘normal’ psychological attributes. This serves to construct particular individual women as non-normative which works to distance them from ‘ordinary’ women. More generally, within this body of work, sexism is rooted firmly in the attributes of the individual. This serves to create the impression that it is only particular individuals who endorse sexism and engage in victim-blaming behaviours. By locating the problem of victim-blaming within individuals, the ways in which normative practices concerned with femininity, masculinity and heterosexuality produce and re-produce gendered patterns of victim-blaming, are overlooked.

In contrast to individualist explanations outlined above, other researchers have explored the ways in which the location of blame in sexual harassment scenarios is constructed in relation to representations of masculinity and femininity in heterosexualised practices. For example, Barter (2006) argues that the way in

which feminine and masculine sexuality is constructed is inextricably tied to how blame is allocated to women recipients and men initiators of gendered violence. In her 2006 study, Barter conducted interviews with men and women based on a vignette which depicted a female resident – Helen – in a children’s home wearing her nightdress to the breakfast table. Helen proceeded to be ‘flirty’ with male residents in general but was particularly flirtatious with one male resident, John. Later on, Helen pushes past John and John touches her breast as she passes by him. Barter (2006) argues that the fictional character ‘Helen’ was constructed in the interview data as culpable for John’s actions. For example, Helen was portrayed in interviews as “asking for it”, “winding him up letting him think he’s in there” and “acting like a slag” (pp. 5-6)). In contrast, John was depicted as “acting like a normal lad”, and unable to “stop himself” because “it’s hard for boys that age” cause their hormones rule everything” (p. 5). Blame for the incident is placed on Helen rather than John because “she shouldn’t be allowed to act like that” (p. 5). For Barter (2006), traditional representations of feminine sexuality as passive mediate responses to sexual harassment through discourses of blame. ‘Helen’ is constructed as ‘provocative’ which sits uncomfortably with passive feminine sexuality. Thus, Helen’s ‘unfeminine’ behaviour is constructed as responsible for instigating boy’s ‘natural’, ‘uncontrollable’ masculinity which ‘inevitably’ leads to sexual violence. Barter (2006) argues that, within this discourse, boys are positioned as victims of not only female provocation but also their own hormonally-driven sexuality. Paradoxically, women are constructed as in control of their sexuality. Given this, women are expected to protect themselves from male violence by altering their own behaviour. Thus, women who ‘fail’ to alter their behaviour are positioned as deserving of blame. For Barter (2006), these victim-blaming discourses ultimately leave women unprotected from, and responsible for, sexual harassment, whereas men remain unaccountable for such actions.

Such victim-blaming discourses may translate into women recipients’ understandings of their experiences of sexual harassment. As mentioned above, some women recipients’ descriptions of the reasons why they had not labelled their experiences as ‘sexual harassment’ draw on victim blaming discourses – the

women recipient is represented as provoking unwanted sexual attention from men in some way (e.g. Harned, 2005). Thus, some women recipients become positioned within such discourses and come to understand themselves as ultimately culpable for sexual harassment (Cairns, 1997). Representations of women recipients' culpability have become embedded within constructions of victimhood. More specifically, Richardson and May (1999), argue that women recipients of gendered violence become constructed as 'innocent' victims and 'accountable' victims. Representations of the 'innocent' victim include women who subscribe to traditional feminine behaviours and who modify their own behaviour to protect themselves from male sexual violence. 'Accountable' women victims, in contrast, behave in a sexually provocative manner towards men and thus make themselves vulnerable to sexual assault by failing to modify their behaviour. According to Barter (2006), the consequences of being an 'accountable' victim include the removal of particular 'privileges' which are reserved for innocent victims. Such 'privileges' include professional support services, recognition, and understanding. Given that women who are seen as culpable for their experiences of gendered violence do not necessarily obtain help and support, it would appear that such recipients would have little to gain by labelling their experiences as 'sexual harassment'.

## **2.7     *Victim identities***

It appears that it is not only representations of the 'accountable' 'victim' that feature in accounts as a reason why women choose not to identify themselves as a recipient of 'sexual harassment'. According to Kitzinger and Thomas (1995), some women refuse to use the label 'sexual harassment' to describe their experiences because they are unwilling to identify themselves as a victim more generally because of its associations with powerlessness, vulnerability and subordination. Similarly, other researchers have argued that some women refuse to identify themselves as the victim in sexual harassment scenarios because they wish to avoid particular connotations of powerlessness and passivity associated with victim status. Such negative depictions of victims include being weak, vulnerable, frightened, emotionally needy and out of control (see, for example,

Janoff-Bulman and Frieze, 1983; Morgen, 2001).

For Kitzinger and Thomas (1995), the term sexual harassment describes the ways in which women are subordinated by men through particular gendered acts. In light of this, Kitzinger and Thomas claim that women recipients who reject victim status by refusing to use the label 'sexual harassment' to describe their experiences are exercising the limited power that their subordinated position will allow. Since the rejection of both victim status and the label 'sexual harassment' forecloses access to formal routes of amelioration, Kitzinger and Thomas argue that this may lead such women recipients to cope with sexual harassment by making a joke of it, playing along or by ignoring it. According to Kitzinger and Thomas, these strategies for dealing with sexual harassment are potentially costly because they fail to problematise conduct explicitly and thus normalising such acts. It seems that for Kitzinger and Thomas, women's rejection of powerless positionings are potentially problematic because it may lead to the adoption of particular coping strategies which fail to challenge sexually harassing behaviour.

In a similar vein, the adoption of victim status has been seen by some researchers as playing a central role in legitimising various forms of gendered violence as problematic. For example, Burt and Estep (1981) argued that dominant representations of a range of coercive gendered practices typically normalise such acts. This serves to deny women a legitimate basis for problematising experiences of such behaviours. For Burt and Estep, the adoption of 'victim status' allows women recipients to be recognised as people who have been unfairly and unjustly treated which is important for destabilising relations of power that deny that gendered acts are a form of victimisation. Whilst Burt and Estep acknowledge that the victim role can have negative connotations, they argue that victim status allows women recipients access to a range of benefits that are more difficult to obtain without it. These benefits include "the right to claim assistance, sympathy, temporary relief from other role responsibilities, legal recourse and other similar advantages" (p. 16). More recently, researchers have suggested that the positioning of women recipients of gendered violence as 'victims' has had enormous benefits in terms of allowing those who challenge such violence access

to funds and legislative apparatus for combating the problem (Ryan, 1992; Nolan, 1998). Reich (2002) also claims that according victim status to women recipients of gendered violence has raised public awareness of violence against women more generally.

Despite the potential that victim status has for legitimising women's experiences of gendered violence, the presentation of victimhood as a tool for resisting sexual harassment has been questioned. More specifically, other researchers have suggested that representations of women recipients of sexual harassment as powerless victims work to consolidate patterns of male dominance and female subordination inscribed in gendered practices in general and gendered violence in particular (e.g. Gavey, 2005). However, women's adoption of the labels 'victim' and 'sexual harassment' are framed differently in relation to the particular ways in which power, resistance and gender are constituted within this body of work. These issues will be addressed in the following sections.

## **2.8    *The problem of passivity***

Some researchers have argued that the labelling of particular acts as sexual harassment can be detrimental to women precisely because it serves to position women recipients as 'victims' (Gavey, 2005; Brewis and Linstead, 2000). Here, the accordance of victim status to women is seen as a problem because of its connotations with weakness, powerlessness and dependency. Since women have been traditionally represented as weak and passive in relation to men, the adoption of victim status is seen to reinforce such depictions of femininity.

It has been argued that the reinforcement of such images of women is further compounded by arguments for 'special protection' in the form of legislation and policies. As Elshtain (1986) points out, conceptualisations in which women recipients are treated as victims in need of protection from sexual harassment perpetuate the idea that women are helpless and incapable of fighting sexual harassment on their own. Elshtain rejects this view of women recipients and instead argues that such protectionism should be abandoned in favour of consciousness raising empowerment. For Elshtain, women are capable of dealing with sexual harassment themselves and efforts aimed at dealing with sexual

harassment should be targeted at encouraging women to develop skills to tackle it at a personal level.

Like Elshtain (1986), Roiphe (1993) suggests that arguments, rules and legislation which portray women recipients of sexual harassment as *victims* and depict legal protection as a necessity only serve to strengthen the image of women as weak and powerless. According to Roiphe, the label 'sexual harassment' and associated legislation should be reserved for coercive acts of power abuse such as *quid pro quo* sexual harassment which is defined by the ways in which employment opportunities are made contingent on employees submitting to unwanted sexual attention. However, Roiphe (1993) is particularly concerned about the ways in which 'ordinary' behaviours such as "leering and ogling, whistling, sexual innuendo and other suggestive or offensive or derogatory comments, humour and jokes about sex" (p. 100) have been constituted as 'sexual harassment' and those who experience such acts are treated as 'victims'. Roiphe suggests that these behaviours function as a normal part of everyday interaction and the danger of according victim status to women who experience such behaviours is that it suggests that women are incapable of coping effectively with any form of unwanted sexual attention. This, she argues, only serves to perpetuate women recipients as helpless, hapless and dependent. Given this, Roiphe argues that the label 'sexual harassment' and associated legislation is inappropriate for resisting and dealing with 'ordinary' behaviours outlined above.

To deal with such 'ordinary' behaviours, Roiphe (1993) suggests that:

"Instead of learning that men have no right to do these terrible things to us, we should be learning to deal with individuals with strength and confidence. If someone bothers us, we should be able to put him in his place without crying into our pillow or screaming for help and counselling ... we should at least be able to handle petty instances like ogling, leering and sexual innuendo at a personal level" (pp. 101-102).



Here, Roiphe's assertion suggests that women are not only able to control their own behaviour but that they are also able to regulate men's sexually harassing behaviours. In Roiphe's account, women are constructed as responsible for communicating to men that sexual harassment is unwanted which serves to position them as accountable for men's behaviour.

According to Brewis and Linstead (2000), discourses which construct women as individually and primarily responsible for stopping sexual harassment and discourses of victimisation which position women as weak, powerless and dependent are equally problematic. For Brewis and Linstead (2000), discourses which position women recipients as primarily responsible for regulating men's sexually harassing behaviour serve to construct perpetrators as unaccountable for their actions. As Kurth, Spiller and Brown Travis (2001) point out, the emphasis on unwantedness in sexual harassment cases places the burden of responsibility on women for monitoring not only their own behaviour but also the behaviour of men. As mentioned above, women who are seen as failing to monitor their own behaviour and the behaviour of others often become constructed as culpable for sexual harassment and thus may be seen as an 'accountable' victim (e.g. Richardson and May, 1999). The location of blame within women recipients of sexual harassment works to undermine their claim to harm because 'they didn't stop it' or because 'they asked for it' (e.g. Harned, 2005). This, as argued above, may discourage such women recipients from labelling their experiences as 'sexual harassment'.

Discourses of female victimisation and of female culpability seem to perpetuate conditions for the (re)production of sexual harassment. As Gavey (2005) points out, the construction of women recipients of gendered violence as helpless victims may work at a broader cultural level to maintain and perpetuate ways of being and acting that make behaviours like rape, sexual coercion and sexual harassment possible. For example, Gavey (2005) argues that such constructions of victimisation may reinforce representations of women as weak, passive and asexual, and depictions of men as having uncontrollable sexual urges and as potentially dangerous. Similarly, representations of women as primarily

responsible for regulating sexual harassment may reinforce images of men's 'unruly' sexual impulses. These representations are embedded within predominant discourses of heterosexuality in which women are positioned as passive and men are positioned as active (e.g. Gavey, 1993; 2005). For example, Jackson (1999) argues that within dominant constructions of heterosexuality, it is:

“men who are expected to initiate sexual encounters and to determine the direction in which they develop...[the women's] part is merely to acquiesce or refuse. Aggression is part of the man's activity. He is not only expected to take the lead but to establish dominance over the woman, to make her please him...sexual conquest becomes an acceptable way of validating masculinity, of demonstrating dominance of and superiority over women” (p. 48).

Such versions of heterosexuality have been drawn on in accounts of sexual harassment. For example, some forms of unwanted sexual attention directed at women by men have been represented as a reflection of those active and passive positions evident in 'normal' heterosexual relationships and can thus be thought of as 'normal' 'courtship' behaviour (e.g., Tangri, Burt and Johnson, 1982). Jackson (1999) further argues that if heterosexuality was not bound up with power and aggression, gendered violence such as sexual harassment and rape would not be possible. For Gavey (2005), such representations of passive femininity and active masculinity are further perpetuated by predominant representations of sexual violence which privilege women's vulnerability to acts such as rape and sexual harassment over their potential for resistance.

The construct of 'survivor' of sexual violence has been treated by some researchers as a means to counter predominant representations of women as passive, vulnerable victims. More specifically survivor discourses have been conceptualised as a space within which recipients of sexual violence can be positioned as agentic (e.g. Dunn, 2005; Hampton, Jenkins and Vandergriff-Avery, 1999). However, the construct of survivor is not without issue. For example, representations of the 'survivor' can produce and reproduce a false dichotomy within which women are either passive objects or active agents (Reich, 2002;

see also Alcoff and Gray, 1993; Spry, 1995). Importantly, in contrast to other forms of violence such as rape, the construct of survivor is not widely used in sexual harassment discourses, particularly in cases where harassment is constituted as less extreme. Given the limitations of both the constructs of 'victim' and 'survivor' for recipients of sexual harassment, the question is how recipient experiences can be legitimised whilst avoiding the (re)production of the victim as passive and powerless.

The question of how we can move past representations of women as powerless, passive victims is further complicated by a predominant representation of women as 'confused' about the issue of sexual harassment. While women in general have been argued to classify a greater number of behaviours as sexual harassment compared men (Dougherty, 2006), a body of research has suggested that women recipients are uncertain and confused about what sexual harassment 'is' and need assistance in order to understand their experience of victimisation. For example, as Kitzinger and Thomas (1995) note:

“despite decades of work surrounding sexual harassment issues, surveys repeatedly find that many women are uncertain as to which behaviours properly qualify as ‘sexual harassment’, and are unwilling to label male behaviour in this way” (p. 33).

Brewis and Linstead (2000) argue that the construction of women as 'helpless' and 'confused' in sexual harassment scenarios “implies a learned helplessness, an understood inability to prevent or even understand men’s behaviour towards them and an understood dependency on others” (p. 89). This, Brewis and Linstead (2000) argue, may translate into women’s understanding of themselves as unable to confront such behaviour. Arguably, this may also translate into the ways in which some women define their experiences as something other than 'sexual harassment'. For example, the ways in which some women question whether their experiences of sexual harassment are legitimately problematic and/or look to others to validate their experiences can be framed in relation to constructions which position women recipients as 'unable' to understand sexual

harassment ‘for what it is’ and as dependent on others (e.g. Brewis and Linstead, 2000; Hinze, 2004; Madison and Minichiello, 2000).

## **2.9    *Revisiting Problematisation***

What is common to the body of work on the issue of non-labelling of sexual harassment reviewed is the tendency to represent women who do not label their experiences using this term as problematic. The problematisation of some women’s non-use of the label can be read as inextricably linked to notions of the term ‘sexual harassment’ as integral to victim resistance discussed earlier. This can be seen in the above literature which often couples the absence of the term ‘sexual harassment’ in women’s descriptions of their experiences of unwanted gendered/sexualised attention with a failure to enact resistance to such conduct. This can not only be seen in claims made in the body of work discussed above but also in more subtle references to the problem of non-labelling. For example, part one in Kitinger and Thomas’s (1997) book on the issue of non-labelling is entitled “refusing the label, declining to protest” (p. 19).

For Lee (2001), the absence of the label ‘sexual harassment’ in women’s accounts of unwanted gendered/sexualised attention does not necessarily mean that such behaviour is going unchallenged. She points out that, in her own studies as well as other studies on the issue, women use a range of different means to constitute unwanted behaviour as problematic as well as a non-trivial experience. These terms includes “sexism” and “working in a sexualised environment” (p. 35). She argues that perhaps what is needed is an extension of the political vocabulary for describing instances of unwanted gendered/sexualised attention to allow recipients to label their experiences in ways that are meaningful to them. Similarly, Epstein (1997) argues that many expressions of unwanted conduct may not be labelled as sexual harassment because particular forms of gendered behaviour do not resonate with ‘everyday’ understandings of the term ‘sexual’. She argues that the use of other terms such as “sexist harassment” might resonate more with particular experiences (p. 156)

In addition to Lee (2001) and Epstein’s (1997) work which points to alternative explanations for women’s non-labelling behaviour, I would argue that it is also

important to explore the implications of the predominant research focus on both women and non-labelling. More specifically, the focus on women recipients acts of (un)resistance against male power re-inscribes gendered discourses of women's accountability for men's behaviour – it is women that are constituted as primary in preventing men from doing sexual harassment. Examination of men's role in the prevention of sexual harassment is rarely discussed. As aforementioned, the focus on women and importantly their possible culpability for unwanted conduct serves to redistribute accountability for sexual harassment. The focus on women as recipients more generally within this body of work functions to locate and (re)produce women as passive victims and men as active agents within hetero-sex which, as argued earlier, reflects the gendered power dynamic which has been argued to sustain the conditions under which sexual harassment is made possible.

The problematisation of women in accounts of non-labelling also, as Lee (2001) and Epstein (1997) note, is based on a conceptualisation of non-labelling as problematic. Building on aforementioned researchers' positions in relation to this argument, I would argue that implicit within the literature is a dichotomy which positions non-labelling as 'bad' and labelling as 'good'. However, it appears that the implicit position of labelling as 'good' has functioned to distract attention away from the issue of how the label is applied and how the phenomenon of sexual harassment is variously defined and understood within the current cultural context. Importantly, the ways in which gendered notions of conduct and of power may become relevant, included or excluded from particular constructions of what sexual harassment 'is' in everyday accounts have lacked sustained critical analysis. To address this issue, this thesis seeks to explore the various ways in which sexual harassment is understood and defined in the current cultural context as well as focusing on how particular issues and concerns are excluded from such understandings. In doing so, this project seeks to move away from the implicit dichotomy of labelling/non-labelling mentioned above.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to trace a path through current debates to make explicit the ways in which sexual harassment are predominantly constituted as a

specific kind of adult relation in which men subordinate women that occurs primarily in the context of the workplace. I have argued that the construction of sexual harassment as a workplace phenomenon can function to distract attention away from its occurrence outside this setting. In addition to this, the positioning of women as victims of sexual harassment serves to locate them as central to the project of resisting this form of sexual violence. This positioning of women can work to redistribute notions of accountability for the expression and prevention of sexual harassment as well as (re)producing the gendered power dynamic of feminine subordination/masculine domination. In a related vein, I have articulated the ways in which women's resistance to unwanted acts have focused on the importance of labelling phenomena as sexual harassment. This particular conceptualisation of resistance appears to have produced a dichotomy in which labelling is conceptualised as 'good' and non-labelling as 'bad'. In this thesis, I attempt to address this issue by exploring how the inclusion and exclusion of particular issues and concerns frame a multiplicity of narratives and accounts around the question of what constitutes sexual harassment.

In the following chapter, attention is shifted from the issue of labelling experiences as 'sexual harassment' to a critical consideration of laws and formal policies designed to resist problematic gendered/sexualised conduct.

## **Chapter 3: Exploring ‘Solutions’ to Sexual Harassment**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The identification of sexual harassment as a significant social problem resulted in the formal recognition of this issue as a cause for concern, particularly in the workplace. During the early 1980s, sexual harassment was legally prohibited in the workplace in a number of countries. For example, in the USA, sexual harassment was construed as unlawful sex discrimination under Title VII Civil Rights Act and as a violation of the Human Rights Act in Canada (e.g. Mackinnon, 1979; Dzeich and Weiner, 1990). It was also taken up as an issue for trade unions (Trade Union Congress, 1983).

In 1986, UK Courts ruled that sexual harassment fell under the rubric of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act which was designed to protect employees in the workplace from discriminatory conduct based on sex. According to Kitinger and Thomas (1997), the constitution of sexual harassment as unlawful forced organisations and institutions to incorporate strategies for dealing with it. This can be seen, for example, in the widespread adoption of sexual harassment policies in the workplace (e.g. Hearn and Parkin, 2001). Indeed, legal prohibition of sexual harassment has sometimes been seen as a sufficient framework for its eradication (Collinson and Collinson, 1992). However, this position appears to be over simplistic in light of research which suggests that sexual harassment it is still endemic in all kinds of employment settings (e.g. Morgen, 2001).

More recently in the UK, the 1997 Protection from Harassment Act was introduced which is intended to provide protection from any form of harassment in or outside the workplace. However, the ability of this law to deal with less extreme instances of sexual harassment has been questioned (e.g. Fairchild and Rudman, 2008).

Given this, it appears that formal policies have been less than successful in eliminating sexual harassment. Despite the limited success of formalised interventions, there appears to be a general lack of research on effective policy implementation or sustained analysis of particular kinds of policies themselves

such as workplace grievance procedures (e.g. Thomas, 2004; Bagilhole and Woodward, 1995).

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which formal prohibitions allow or constrain challenges to be made against sexual harassment. This chapter will begin by examining key influences on the development of sexual harassment employment law. I focus on employment law because formal prohibitions have primarily been developed to deal with sexual harassment in this context. Laws that have more recently been developed to deal with sexual harassment outside the workplace will then be discussed. Lastly, I will explore issues pertaining to the formulation, development and implementation of sexual harassment workplace policies. Throughout this chapter, I will unpack the various ways in which laws and policies may shape recipient experiences of seeking amelioration. It should be noted that US legal developments have impacted prohibitions in the UK. Therefore, this chapter will discuss aspects of US law in relation to sexual harassment in the UK.

### **3.2    *Issues of Equality***

Issues of gender equality have been explicitly raised as the basis on which sexual harassment is generally prohibited in law and many policy initiatives. More specifically, according to Zippel (2006), the positioning of sexual harassment as a form of *sex discrimination* underpins legal prohibition of it. This can be seen in the ways in which the issue has been taken up in law. As mentioned earlier, in the UK, sexual harassment has been primarily regulated by the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act which deals with sex discrimination against employees at work. This act does not outlaw sexual harassment *per se*. However, it prohibits any form of sexual harassment which can be read as a form of sex discrimination. According to the 1975 Sexual Discrimination Act, Section 1, sexual harassment has occurred when:

“a person discriminates against a woman in any circumstances relevant for the purposes of any provision of this act if on the grounds of her sex he treats her less favourably than he treats or



would treat a man” (p. 1)

It should be noted that whilst the act specifically refers to discrimination against women, the law does provide the same protection for men. Thus, to subject a man to sexual harassment because of his gender could potentially amount to less favourable treatment and unlawful gender discrimination. According to Edmunds, Hopkins and Williams (1998), the way in which courts have made decisions about whether sexual harassment constitutes gender discrimination under the provisions of the act is to assess whether the conduct in question could be directed at individuals regardless of their gender. If conduct is deemed to be ‘gender neutral’ then, according to this version of UK law, sexual harassment has not occurred.

According to Crouch (2001), the description of gender discrimination in this act resonates with the way in which equality is broadly conceptualised within liberal perspectives. Broadly speaking, liberal perspectives often draw on a version of equality which would argue that equals should be treated alike and unequals should be treated differently. However, for unequal treatment to be justified, the differences must be relevant to the issues at hand (e.g. Mappes and Zembaty, 1992). The act resonates with this version of equality insofar as it appears to assume that men and women are or should be equal and thus should be treated alike (e.g. Samuels, 2004).

Arguments which suggest that differential treatment on the basis of gender is necessary for a claim for sex discrimination to be upheld have been questioned. For example, Ranney (2000) suggests that this view of equality allows for what he terms the “equal opportunity harasser” defence. This defence rests on the requirement that, for sexual harassment to have occurred, behaviours must not only be offensive but discriminatory in the legal sense of the term. The distinction made between offensive and discriminatory behaviours allows initiators to make the claim that because their behaviour offends both men and women they are not guilty of unlawful gender discrimination.

According to Edmunds, Hopkins and Williams (1998), this defence was used successfully in the case of *Stewart vs. Cleveland Guest Ltd*, where a woman

complained about visual displays of nude or partially nude women in her place of work. In this case, sexual harassment was deemed not to have occurred because it was argued that a man may have been equally offended by these images. The logic of this argument suggests that for the law to be successfully used there must be a clear gender difference in men and women's understandings of what counts as sexual harassment. What seems to be overlooked in this argument is that whilst men and women may be offended by a particular form of conduct this does not preclude that such conduct maintains forms of inequality that impact women and men in specific ways (Samuels, 2003).

### **3.3     *Sameness and Difference***

It is precisely consideration of the ways in which men and women's lives are gendered that led Mackinnon (1979) to explore the limitations of the versions of equality which posit that equals should be treated alike and unequals should be treated differently. For Mackinnon (1979), this view of equality, which she terms the differences approach, is problematic because it fails to consider the complexity of gendered power relations. More specifically, she argues that gender is a hierarchically organised power relation with men occupying dominant positions relative to women more generally. This, she claims, is particularly salient in the workplace which has predominately been a masculinised culture. Thus the standards for acceptable behaviour in this context have largely been determined from a male perspective.

According to Mackinnon, the differences approach fails to take into account this hierarchical organisation of gender relations. Instead, it posits men as the norm in relation to which women are compared and determined to be similarly or differently situated. Thus, for Mackinnon, if women are treated as if they were the same they may be disadvantaged. This is because their experience will be judged by a standard based on men's lives which may not necessarily reflect women's lives. However, if they are treated as different within the context of the differences approach they may also be disadvantaged. This is because they will still be judged in relation to the male norm and may thus be seen as demanding unequal protection or consideration. For Fredman (1997), this view of equality

accepts male as the norm without challenge which means that women are required to adhere to masculinised terms.

In addition to this, particular inadequacies of the differences approach have been highlighted when applied to cases of sexual harassment in which expressions of gender inequality become interwoven with differential treatment based on sexualities (Beger, 2004). This can be seen in the 2003 case of *Pearce vs. Governing Body of Mayfield Secondary School*. Pearce was a lesbian teacher who was subjected to derogatory comments by the children which included 'lesbian', 'lemon' and 'lezzie'. She claimed that that treatment constituted discrimination under the provisions of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. According to Samuels (2004), this claim proved to be complex precisely because it was not only gender that was at issue but also sexual orientation. The specific difficulty that arose was with the legal requirement that individuals must be compared to another who is similarly situated. The argument was made that the correct comparator in this case was not a heterosexual man because this was not comparing like with like. Instead it was deemed that the correct comparator was a gay man. Moreover, it was argued that Pearce was subjected to a range of problematic behaviour which was inextricably connected to sexuality. Only some of these behaviours were regarded by the courts to have a gendered dimension. It was argued that this treatment must be looked at as a whole rather than being broken down to specific instances. Therefore it was concluded that a gay male teacher would have been treated no more favourably than Pearce in these circumstances. It appears then the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act provides little recourse for those subjected to heterosexist discriminatory practices precisely because it excludes non-heterosexual sexuality from understandings of gender discrimination.

The Equal Treatment Amendment Directive (E.T.A.D) (2002) was introduced to address the difficulties outlined above with the version of equality incorporated in the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. The E.T.A.D., unlike the Sex Discrimination Act, explicitly names sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination and prohibits manifestations which centre on gender and/or sexual orientation. Moreover, Samuels (2004) argues that it does not require a comparison with a

member of the opposite gender for conduct to be considered gender discrimination. This according to Samuels (2004), not only removes the possibility of the 'equal opportunities harasser' defense but also removes the problematic requirement highlighted by Mackinnon that involves women having to be compared to masculinised norms. However, like the Sex Discrimination Act, the E.T.A.D., relies on the establishment of conduct as more or less objectively 'unreasonable' and 'unwelcome' for a complaint of sexual harassment to be upheld. It is to these issues that the discussion now turns.

### **3.4 *Unreasonable Behaviour?***

Notions of reasonableness have been drawn on in US and UK law in determination of sexual harassment cases. More specifically, court assessment involves whether it can be considered 'reasonable' to find the conduct in question offensive and unwelcome (Crouch, 2001). In US law, court assessment of reasonableness explicitly takes place not only from the perspective of the recipient but also from an objective standpoint. The need to assess conduct from the recipient's perspective was meant to contextualise why behaviour was found to be offensive and unwelcome. The rationale for viewing conduct from an objective standpoint was based on the possibility that the complainant might be over sensitive and unreasonably offended by innocent behaviour (e.g. Samuels, 2004).

In contrast, UK law adopts what Samuels (2003) refers to as a 'subjective' approach to the issue of reasonableness of conduct. According to Samuels, the subjective approach relies on the recipient's perception of what is reasonable and acceptable conduct. This approach acknowledges that tribunals may differ from the recipient in their assessment of reasonable behavior. However, this does not mean that because the tribunal regards conduct as to a greater or lesser extent acceptable that the recipient's complaint would be dismissed. Despite emphasising the importance of the recipient's subjective point of view on the unacceptability of behavior, it appears that the need for objectivity is in implicit operation in court assessment. This can be seen in the Employment Appeal Tribunal's claim that in assessment of conduct:

“any *sensible adult* [who] would know that the remark made was unwanted unless there were very exceptional circumstances. The word ‘unwanted’ is essentially the same as ‘unwelcome’ or ‘uninvited’. No one, other than a person used to indulging in loutish behaviour, could think that the remark ... was other than obviously unwanted” (EAT, as cited in, Gillow, Hopkins, Edmund and Williams, 2003: 10).

However, this inevitably begs the question of who is this sensible adult?

In the above quote, the construction of two distinct categories of people serves to create the impression that it is only a certain type of person who engages in sexually harassing behaviour. The ‘type’ of person that initiates sexual harassment is constructed, by virtue of the label ‘lout’, as deviant which serves to distance them from the sensible adult who knows, understands and follows normative standards of appropriate conduct. The construction of the ‘sensible adult’ does not fit in with other accounts of sexual harassment which have argued that behaviour that could be labelled as such is a common occurrence in many individuals, particularly women’s, lives (see Chapter 1). This is because ‘loutish’ behaviour is non-normative and thus rarefied.

The construction of the ‘sensible adult’ resonates with the ‘reasonable person’ standard that is used to judge whether an incident counts as sexual harassment in USA legislation (e.g. Crouch, 2001). The reasonable person standard in sexual harassment cases refers to a hypothetical individual who is neither hypersensitive nor impervious to particular kinds of conduct in the workplace. It is this perspective of this hypothetical person which is drawn on by courts to assess cases. The description of the ‘reasonable person’ and the ‘sensible adult’ suggests a gender neutral perspective. However, many scholars and professionals question the presumption that the reasonable person standard is as neutral as it purports to be.

As Debruin (1998) points out, using the word ‘person’ does not automatically make it genderless. Rather, the reasonable person perspective often embodies

masculinist assumptions. More specifically, objectivity and rationality which appear to define the reasonable person are often privileged in discourses around hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) argues that hegemonic masculinity refers to an idealised image of what it is to be a man in relation to representations of femininity and marginalised masculinities. The hegemonic idealised masculinity in the current western culture is heterosexual, aggressive, risk taking and *rational*. The feminised other is by contrast characterised as its binary opposite in that she is emotional, subjective and *irrational*.

Women have often been characterised as:

“inconsistent, emotionally unstable, lacking in a strong conscience or superego, weaker, ‘nurturant’ rather than productive, ‘intuitive’ rather than intelligent...suited to the home and the family. In short, the list adds up to a typical minority group stereotype of inferiority” (Weisstein 1993, p. 207).

Such discourses around masculinity and femininity can work to prioritise masculinised identity and experience as the standard of what it is to be a ‘proper’ person. Similarly, other scholars have noted that the reasonable person standard represents the viewpoint of those who have the power to determine what constitutes appropriate behaviour. According to various research such as Crouch (2001), these individuals are largely men. The problem with this, according to Crouch is that particular masculinist perspectives may fail to see particular forms of sexual harassment as a cause for concern.

Discourses of the masculine ideal and feminised other in their various manifestations have been used to validate discrimination against women. For example, Wilson (1992) argued that men are more likely than women to reach the higher echelons of the professional hierarchy because men are biologically predisposed to be competitive and because dominance is a personality trait which is determined by male hormones. The obvious implication of such ‘findings’ is that women by virtue of their biology can never enjoy the same successes within

the workplace as men. Thus it seems that the reasonable person standard may serve to maintain discourses of male privilege that it seeks to undermine.

Given concerns that the 'reasonable person' or 'sensible adult' perspective lacked impartiality, Monti (2000) argues that UK courts should adopt the 'reasonable woman' standard which has been used in legislation in the USA. The hypothetical 'reasonable woman' was introduced to address the shortcomings of the reasonable person standard. The reasonable woman standard is predicated on the idea that men and women's perspectives on the issue of sexual harassment are different. More specifically, it is based on the idea that women label a greater range of behaviours as sexual harassment than men do. Thus, the argument goes that particular conduct will not be understood as sexual harassment precisely because it is being judged from the perspective of men rather than women. The purpose of viewing cases from the perspective of the reasonable woman was to encourage the courts to take into account the perspectives of women who had not previously had a say in determining appropriate workplace behaviour. However, the employment of the reasonable woman standard as a solution to the problem of previous standards appears to be questionable. It is predicated on the assumption that men and women are fundamentally different monolithic categories and ignores similarities between men and women as well as differences in perspectives within gendered groups.

This assumption of gender difference could reinforce particular forms of sexism that it seeks to counter. As DeBruin (1998) points out, the introduction of a separate standard for women may support problematic representations about them which infer that they are sensitive, fragile and in need of more protection than men. As mentioned above, it is precisely such representations that were used to justify women's subordinate position in the workplace. It would seem then that the reasonable woman standard does not directly tackle the main issue with the reasonable person standard, that is, that the latter standard represents the viewpoint of 'men'. It appears to side-step the issue by introducing the notion of gender difference rather than challenging representations of the reasonable person as a masculinised standard.

### **3.5 *Welcome or Unwelcome? Issues of consent***

For behaviour to constitute sexual harassment in UK law, it not only needs to be seen as unreasonable but also as unwelcome. According to Edmunds, Hopkins and Williams (1998), court assessments of early sexual harassment cases generally required evidence that the recipient had attempted to communicate to the initiator that conduct was unwelcome. This is because absence of the communication of unwelcomeness allows the initiator to make the argument that they could not know that particular conduct was offensive before they have performed it. The implication of this argument is that it is unreasonable to invoke legislative intervention at the outset because the initiator must have received feedback to know that their conduct is offensive. This, of course, potentially allows the manifestation of a variety of forms of problematic conduct to be performed and rejected at least once for the initiator to know that their behaviour was unwelcome.

Despite the problems with the reasonableness standard in US law described above, it arguably functions to at least partially release the recipient from the responsibility of making it clear to the initiator that their conduct is unwelcome. However, there still appears to be the requirement that recipients of sexual harassment clearly reject problematic conduct (e.g. Samuels, 2004).

Monti (2000) described guidelines that were designed to deal with the issue of consent in court cases. The guidelines state that with regard to ambiguous behaviour in particular the recipient must communicate to the initiator that the behaviour is unwelcome. However, these guidelines take into account that women may be afraid of the initiator and thus an indirect act such as leaving the room rather than direct confrontation would be sufficient in signalling unwelcomeness. Monti (2000) argues that these guidelines may well be seen as more sympathetic to difficulties around communication of welcomeness for recipients. For example, the lack of requirement for direct refusal of problematic conduct can be viewed as sensitive to some research findings which suggest that women use indirect strategies to cope with sexual harassment which include ignoring or avoiding behaviour rather than direct strategies which include confrontation (e.g. Gutek and



Koss, 1996).

It is not only within court procedures that a clear statement of unwelcomeness has been required. In workplace policies and grievance procedures the initial step in dealing with sexual harassment often involves encouraging the recipient to ask the initiator to stop. In resources which give advice to employers on how to formulate 'effective' policies this is sometimes positioned as a means to 'empower' the recipient (see, for example, Herbert, 1994). The possibility of the recipient's reluctance to do this is often drawn attention to in these documents. In this case, it is often suggested that unwelcomeness is communicated by a third party such as a line manager (see, for example, Herbert, 1994). However, it could be argued that there are a number of problems with the representation of non-consent.

Whilst the strategies do not require direct confrontation it could be argued that active demonstration of unwelcomeness is necessary to successfully win a claim. For example, the action of leaving a room to signal unwelcomeness could be described as an active manifestation of non-consent. The need for an active clear display of non-consent resonates with discourses around masculinities in which men are positioned as incapable of controlling 'natural' sexual urges (e.g. Hollway, 1989). As Pateman (1980) argued:

"it is always women who are held to consent to men. The "naturally" superior, active and sexually aggressive male makes an initiative, or offers a contract, to which naturally subordinate, passive women "consents" (p. 164).

The need for a clear display of non-consent can also be read in terms of the positioning of men as inept at tuning into the subtleties of social situations which require feminised attributes such as empathy and deep understanding of relationships (e.g. Walkerdine, 1990).

In the above constructions of masculine and feminine sexualities, women are positioned as accountable for men's behaviour. As Kurth, Spiller and Brown Travis (2001) point out, the emphasis on unwantedness in sexual harassment cases

places the burden of responsibility on women for monitoring not only their own behaviour but also the behaviour of men. Furthermore, women are often positioned as responsible for communicating explicitly otherwise subtle shades of meaning to initiators who would prefer to remain obtuse on such issues. This is evident in one manual on sexual harassment policy which stated that:

“men often do not realise that their behaviour might be objectionable and stop the behaviour as soon as they are confronted with it” (Rubenstein and De Vries, 1993, p. 62)

The emphasis on the recipient for making it known to the initiator that their conduct is unwelcome appears to prioritise the initiators belief about consent over and above the treatment that the recipient is subjected to. This resonates with the ways in which the issue of consent has been treated in sexual violence cases more generally. Historically, the legal test of consent in rape trials has been that if a man honestly believes that the woman is consenting then he cannot be convicted of the crime (Duncan, 1995; Raitt and Zeedyk, 2000). This serves to imbue men with the power to decide if a non-consenting woman is consenting without having to make reference to any external standard of reasonableness. This argument resonates with the ways in which consent is constructed in sexual harassment policy and law in that it appears to start with the premise that the initiator believes that consent has been given. Thus, it seems that it is the responsibility of the recipient to communicate standards of reasonableness.

This issue of accountability is reflected in Dine and Watt's (1995), argument that the potential impact of these guidelines is that the courts will assess whether the form of refusal was sufficient to display rejection of the initiator's behaviour. Moreover, Monti (2000) argues that the guidelines fail to protect women who use alternative coping strategies such as participating in behaviour to defuse the situation or aligning themselves with the initiator to avoid being the recipient of problematic conduct. These kinds of strategies may be used to prove to the courts

that no objection was presented to the conduct in question.

As has historically been the case in rape trials, the assessment of conduct as unwelcome in sexual harassment cases rests on the extent to which recipients' conduct can be read as 'open' to and accepting of sexualised behaviour. As argued in Chapter 1, constructions of 'provocative' feminine sexuality are often positioned as problematic in that such behaviour deviates from acceptable passive femininities. Constructions of 'provocative' feminine sexualities have been drawn on in victim-blaming discourses to locate the women as accountable for their experiences of unwanted sexual attention as women recipients can be positioned as not discouraging male sexual attention. Edmunds, Hopkins and Williams (1998) argue that evidence of female 'provocation' has been introduced into court assessment. They argue that although evidence about the 'recipient's character cannot be used as a defence in a case, it can be used to reduce the potential compensation payout. This is because the amount of compensation awarded depends on court decisions about the degree of detriment suffered. This can be seen in the case of *Wileman vs Minilec Engineering Ltd* (1988) in which a woman complained that one of the company directors was sexually harassing her. In this case, it was argued that the courts need to take into account that the woman wore provocative clothing to work. On this basis, the detriment suffered by the woman was deemed to be not as great. Given this, the compensation paid to the woman was limited to £50.

It appears then that representations of feminine sexuality are drawn on to establish the degree to which conduct could be considered to be unwelcome. The dress of the complainant in this case is seen to represent active seeking of sexual advances or conduct. As with the use of past sexual history of the victim in rape cases, specific constructions of the recipient's style of dress, sexual attitudes and/or sexuality can be invoked to invite a response which inevitably blames the recipient for the predicament that they find themselves in (Gavey, 2005). It seems then for the complainants, particularly women, to be considered an unequivocal victim, they must behave in accordance to the representation of feminine sexuality as passive (e.g. Larcombe, 2002). The case of *Wileman vs Minilec Engineering*

Ltd appears to not only draw on this representation but reinforces the idea that woman should be passive by punishing what could be read as deviations from normative versions of femininity.

### **3.6 *Leaving the Office***

As has been highlighted above, in both research and policy, sexual harassment has been constructed primarily as a problem that arises in the workplace (see, for example, Mackinnon, 1979; Mott and Condor, 1997; Marin and Guadagno, 1999; Morgen, 2001). However, the introduction of the Protection from Harassment Act (1997) locates sexual harassment in the wider social context. Arguably, this has the potential to draw attention to the complexity of power relations and positionings that are not ‘determined’ or limited in any direct sense to the economic (see for example, Walkerdine, 1990).

According to Budd, Mattison and Myhill (2000), the prohibition of sexual harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act (1997) arose from governmental concerns around the difficulties of seeking legal redress for stalking – a term which gained popularity in media portrayals of the issue

Whilst the terms ‘sexual harassment’ and ‘stalking’ are used interchangeably within the legal literature, it seems that what distinguishes them is that forms of stalking may not necessarily have a gendered dimension (Conaghan, 1999). The 1997 Protection from Harassment Act is intended to deal with any persistent or unwanted behaviour and the issue of sexual harassment becomes subsumed under this more general rubric. According to Conaghan (1999), “the Act does not define harassment with any precision” (p. 206). Instead it offers a general description of harassment as a “course of conduct” which must occur “on at least two occasions”, presumably by the same perpetrator (Conaghan, 1999, p. 206).

The framing of the issue of sexual harassment within stalking discourses positions the issue outside the workplace within mental health discourses of ‘obsessional’ behaviour and/or within romantic discourses of the ‘unrequited lover’ (e.g. Gibbons, 1998). Within these discourses, the ‘harasser’ is often positioned as active initiator whereas the feminised other is positioned as passive. As noted in

Chapter 2, the positioning of masculine sexualities as active and feminine sexualities as passive is central to and are (re)produced within normative notions of heterosexuality. The power positionings of masculine and feminine sexualities within normative heterosexuality have been argued to be key to the (re)production and maintenance of sexual harassment. Issues around consent and non-consent are constructed in terms of presence or absence of sexual interest on the part of the recipient. The issue of sexual harassment can thus become framed within individualist conceptualisations of initiator-recipient relations – a conceptualisation which divorces instances of sexual harassment from wider social practices that sustain gender inequality (e.g. Gavey, 2005).

Like workplace laws, the Protection from Harassment law draws on notions of reasonableness in assessment of evidence. However, within the latter Act, the reasonable person standard described above is applied to the perpetrator's perception of the reasonableness of his or her actions that is the focus of scrutiny. More specifically, the Acts state that the harasser "knows or ought to know [that particular forms of conduct] amount to harassment of another". When deciding what the harasser "knows" or "ought to know", courts use the perspective of the reasonable person to determine whether information known to the harasser would subsequently contextualise behaviour(s) as harassment. Conaghan (1999) argues that there are two main problems with the application of the 'reasonable person' standard in this context. Firstly, she suggests that the assumption that a reasonable person would know that behaviours could be deemed as harassment implies a degree of consensus on the issue of what counts as harassment in particular contexts which may not exist. Secondly, the Act only considers what is reasonable from the initiator's viewpoint, not from the perspective of the 'reasonable' recipient. Conaghan argues that, given that sexual harassment is highly gendered with women predominantly positioned as victims and men as perpetrators, consideration of behaviour from the perpetrators viewpoint most probably assumes normative masculinised assumptions of appropriate behaviour. Therefore problems with the reasonable person standard outlined above also apply to the application of this Act.

### **3.7     *Challenging Sexual Harassment?***

The arguments presented above indicate that the law reproduces and maintains specific forms of gendered/heterosexualised assumptions that it was intended to counter. More specifically, it appears to reproduce heterosexualised gender differences that position the masculine and feminine in binary opposition such as active-passive, subjective-objective, rational-irrational, emotive-non-emotive. As argued above, these representations have worked to exclude the feminised other from privileged positions in the workplace. However, legal prohibition has appeared to be a primary motivator in encouraging the regulation of this behaviour in the workplace. This issue will be addressed in the following sections.

### **3.8     *Workplace policies***

According to Ranney (2000), in recent years there has been a proliferation of resources for employers available on how to draft and implement a sexual harassment policy. The opening pages of some resources on how to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace make reference to cumulative costs that may result from failing to deal with it effectively. These costs include loss of employee productivity, paying sick leave and/or replacing staff that choose to leave as a result of their treatment (e.g. Edmunds, Hopkins and William, 1998). The legal implications for organisations arising from failure to tackle sexual harassment are primarily described in terms of financial losses in the form of compensation if the employer is found liable (e.g. Herbert, 1994). The potential for damage to an organisation's reputation is also highlighted in some literature as a likely inhibitor of economic productivity (e.g. Levy and Paludi, 2002). More specifically, an organisation that gains a reputation for allowing conditions that give rise to sexual harassment runs the risk of losing potential employees, investors and customers all of which are constructed as potentially impacting a company's desired financial productivity. Thus, the importance of adopting formalised procedures to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace is primarily embedded within profit and loss discourses within much of the literature on sexual harassment policy. Sexual harassment policies are thus warranted by the extent to which such conduct presents a barrier to profitable business rather than as a challenge to

gendered power relations *per se*.

Whilst the profit and loss discourse appears to be 'gender-neutral', it can be argued to be embedded within constructions of the workplace as masculinised. Hearn and Parkin (2001) argue that success in the workplace is central in the expression of particular masculinities. For example, competition and ambitiousness, which are typically constructed as 'masculine traits', are expressed through hierarchical advance, careerism and economic productivity. According to Hearn and Parkin (2001), competition often reflects the ways in which those in masculine positionings are constructed as the 'breadwinner'. The profit and loss discourse appears to resonate with particular masculine ideals of competitiveness and success within the organisational setting (see also Connell, 1995).

Indeed, the profit and loss discourse has been credited by some researchers as one impetus for some organisational engagement with the development of sexual harassment policy. For example, Williams, Cocking and Davies (1989) argued that universities were generally complacent about the implementation of equal opportunities policies which at the time were partly designed to provide protection against sexual harassment. However, Morley (1997) notes that during the 1990s many organisations began to market themselves as investors in equal opportunities. For example, in universities there was a rapid proliferation of slogans such as 'working towards equal opportunities' on stationery and on adverts (e.g. Thomas, 2004). According to Morley (1997), the concern within universities about sexual harassment reflects the move towards managerialism that was beginning to take root in these institutions. Universities were increasingly positioning themselves as a business and because of this they were becoming more sensitive to the need to market themselves both to the student 'clientele' as well as towards potential employees. Therefore, through the adoption of equal opportunities and sexual harassment policies, universities were able to present themselves as 'forward looking'.

Morley's work draws attention to the ways in which the constitution of sexual harassment within a profit and loss discourse resonates with the concerns of particular organisations. This discourse positions sexual harassment policy as

central to the functioning of a profitable business rather than as a peripheral concern. Thus, the constitution of the need for policies within a profit and loss discourse may encourage organisational engagement with this issue.

Whilst organisational concerns about potential costs of sexual harassment may give rise to policy development, these issues may be translated into policy and practice in variable ways which do not necessarily represent an effective challenge to such conduct. This can be seen in what Thomas (2004) identified as a 'top down' approach to policy development. According to Thomas, this approach is associated with concerns about employer liability which gained increased emphasis during the 1990s. These concerns appear to be reflected in the content of 'top down' policies. What appear to be emphasised are the legal implications of sexual harassment. These can be seen in the use of definitions of sexual harassment which highlight the legal repercussions of harassment as a form of discrimination under the provisions of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. The distinctly legalistic tone of such policies is further reflected in accounts of specific procedures to deal with sexual harassment. For example, in Thomas's study, one policy document described dealing with sexual harassment as:

"a very serious matter and must be handled properly through defined procedures. Anyone considering making a complaint ... should seek guidance (pursuant to paragraph 4 above) and, if a complaint is made under the appropriate complaints procedure ... and is upheld, it will be handled in accordance with ... disciplinary procedures." (p. 150).

Issues that appear to be prioritised in this extract are formality of protocols and due process which serve to create the impression that the organisation is working in line with legislation.

Thomas (2004) points to a contrast between the legalistic tone of 'top down' policies and a more recipient-orientated stance adopted by 'consultative' approaches to policy development. In policies developed from a 'consultative' approach, there appears to be less emphasis on legal implications. This can be



seen in the use of definitions that highlight that sexual harassment is a problematic and contested concept. Thomas (2004) argues that by emphasising the ambiguity of some forms of sexually harassing conduct, this approach may encourage individuals to seek advice in 'grey area' situations.

In 'consultative' approaches sexual harassment is constructed as a community concern. This can be seen in an extract from Thomas's study where the policy stated that

"the university is committed to acting positively to resolve the issue of sexual harassment and is involved in a programme of staff training to heighten awareness about this important issue and to contribute to its prevention...All staff and students are responsible for helping to ensure that individuals do not suffer sexual harassment and that they are encouraged and supported in any legitimate complaint" (p. 149)

Unlike in top down policies, sexual harassment is constructed as a social problem which requires all individuals to take some responsibility for tackling it. This approach draws on notions of care when describing responses to the recipient which are absent in the 'top down' policies.

According to Thomas (2004), these two styles of policy development impact levels of reporting with institutions that use the consultative approach reporting more usage of policies to report incidents of sexual harassment than those using top down approaches. It could be argued that the legalistic tone of 'top down' policies functions as a sufficient deterrent which would explain low reporting levels. However, given that there is a large body of research which suggests that sexual harassment is widespread despite formal mandates against it, it would seem that this interpretation is unlikely (e.g. Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997). Thomas (2004) argues instead that 'top down' policies may inhibit reporting while 'consultative' approaches may serve to encourage reporting or at least be less discouraging of it. She suggests that the language used in the policy may be important in terms of the degree of support that it conveys to potential

complainants. Some research suggests that individuals are reluctant to report sexual harassment because they lack confidence in the policy and its ability to provide them with support in dealing with the situation at hand (e.g. Thomas, 1997). Therefore policies which prioritise recipient care rather than legal ramifications may encourage reporting.

A further aspect of these two policy styles that may affect reporting is the way in which sexual harassment is constituted as a problem. Thomas (2004) argues that 'top down' policies tend to construct sexual harassment as a personal problem resulting from interpersonal conflict which will be arbitrated by employers if the problem becomes sufficiently bothersome. This particular message may not be conducive to facilitating reporting. The framing of sexual harassment as an individualised predicament may heighten recipient concerns about the impact that complaining will have on other people's perceptions and responses of them. Some research suggests that recipients will often not report incidents and instead choose to leave their employment rather than run the risk of acquiring a reputation for being a troublemaker or 'making a fuss' (e.g. Morgen, 2001). In contrast 'consultative' policies construct sexual harassment as detrimental to the organisational community at large which positions it as a wider social problem. Thomas (2004) argues that this in itself may reduce the sense of personal shame that those experiencing sexual harassment often feel which in turn may facilitate reporting and taking action against it. In addition to the style of policy adopted, the specific procedures for reporting used appeared to impact whether recipients complained about sexual harassment. It is to these different procedures for reporting sexual harassment that the discussion now turns.

### **3.9     *Formal or Informal?***

Resources for employees on how to deal with sexual harassment tend to depict informal and formal strategies for redress as dichotomous stages in the grievance procedure. The first stage is informal where, as mentioned above, the recipient is encouraged to ask the initiator to stop. If the recipient is reluctant to do this, mediation between the two parties by a third person is suggested. In the event that the incident(s) alleged to have occurred is considered too serious for informal

resolution or when this route fails to remedy the situation then formal procedures are suggested. The formal procedure involves an investigation into the incident(s) and could potentially result in disciplinary measures against the initiator.

In Thomas's study, top down approaches to policy development were associated with more formal reporting procedures which involves recipients filing a complaint with their immediate superior such as a line manager. The obvious problem with this approach is that the immediate superior to whom the recipient should complain could be the initiator of sexual harassment. For this reason, policies that use this kind of reporting procedure typically outline other superiors that can be approached with a complaint (e.g. Nobile, 1994). In contrast, consultative policies tended to employ an informal advice network which is intended to enable individuals to discuss incidents or problems. Responsibility for dealing with cases at least in the first instances rests with an equal opportunities body rather than with line managers or personnel departments (e.g. Herbert, 1994). This reporting procedure does not have any official implications and allows the recipient to work through a course of action with an advisor to deal with sexual harassment that they feel comfortable with. Thomas (2004) suggests that the informal reporting procedure is associated with higher levels of reporting compared to the more formal approach. Similarly, other researchers have suggested that informal resolution is the preferred procedure by many recipients. This appears to be because it avoids the possibility of conflict, confrontation and hostility that may result from accusing someone formally of sexual harassment. Instead, the informal approach concentrates on mediation and negotiation of problematic relationships with a view to making those relationships 'workable'. It is often emphasised that records of the meeting or accusation should not be kept on the initiator's file (e.g. Herbert, 1994).

Informal resolution is often presented as a desirable approach because of the lack of success of more formal reporting procedures in encouraging individuals, particularly women, to make complaints. More specifically, some scholars have argued that the ineffectiveness of formal procedures in encouraging reporting can be attributed to the ways in which hierarchical and formal reporting procedures

incorporate male bias.

For example, Riger (1993) claims that formal procedures involve a distinctly masculinised approach to dealing with conflict which are characterised by direct confrontation. For Riger, this style of problem resolution is inimical to women because it is not compatible with women's style of conflict resolution. Women, according to Riger, prefer informal procedures because their 'caring orientation' makes them more interested in stopping behaviour through, for example, education rather than punishing offenders.

Whilst, Riger's (1993) work suggests that the adoption of informal procedures may increase the efficacy of policy intervention in terms of encouraging women to report, Ranney (2000) cautions against the introduction of informal procedures as a means of correcting gender bias. More specifically, he argues that the 'caring' orientation of women may reflect the subordinate positions that they occupy in the workplace. Women are often resigned to having less power at work than men. Thus, the reluctance to draw on formal procedures may be a reflection of their relative power position. Ranney (2000) argues that women may lack confidence that they can 'win' when challenging those who occupy more powerful positions. Accordingly, recipients of sexual harassment often develop alternative procedures for dealing with it. These alternative strategies include avoiding the situation by leaving their employment, using leave to allow the situation to ease or ignoring the situation with the hope that the initiator will stop.

It would seem that both Riger's (1993) and Ranney's (2000) argument construct sexual harassment as a heterosexualised problematic behaviour in which women are the recipients and men are the initiators. Riger's account appears to reproduce men and women as binary opposites which are characterised by active and passive positionings. Similarly Ranney's account positions men as active and women as passive. Therefore it could be argued that both accounts reproduce positionings of men and women that are often constructed as crucial to the maintenance of sexual harassment itself.

Within some resources for employers on how to deal with sexual harassment, informal resolution appears to be constructed as a means of resuming normal working relationships. For example, Herbert (1994) argues that the aim of the informal stage is for “swift resolution, stop the behaviour from being repeated and enable working relationships between all parties to be resumed” (Herbert, 1994, p. 44). As Herbert’s quote emphasises, the informal resolution phase is presented in resources as being about the facilitation of productivity of workers rather than necessarily challenging gendered conduct *per se*. Indeed, Mitchell (1997) raises concerns about the ways in which informal resolution has been deployed as a strategy for dealing with sexual harassment. More specifically, informal resolution may serve to trivialise complaints. This is because informal resolution is often framed as a process of working through an interpersonal problem. This may serve to set sexual harassment up as a conflict or emotional problem to be resolved by both parties rather than as an infringement of civil or equal rights. Mitchell argues that this downplays sexual harassment as an unlawful act of discrimination and reframes it instead as an impropriety. This resonates with the problems around formalised ‘top down’ approaches outlined earlier. It seems then that informal and formalised approaches can potentially trivialise sexual harassment as a private problem depending on the way in which that they are framed and deployed in policy and practice.

Mitchell’s (1997) concern about informal resolution is that, when it is presented as a prerequisite to formal procedures, this might serve to trivialise complaints of sexual harassment. She argues that it may also serve the interest of organisations rather than the interests of the complainant themselves. This is because organisations may be able to successfully avoid being embroiled in legal procedures and potentially negative publicity through the informal route. In contrast formal procedures may highlight the importance of the recipients experience by positioning it as a potentially unlawful act.

The formal stage of policy is presented as an investigation that is not unlike some police procedures for dealing with sexual violence. This stage involves collecting evidence in the form of interviews with the recipient, alleged initiator(s) and

witnesses. The evidence will then be presented to a panel that make a decision about whether sexual harassment has occurred. In the case where there is no corroborative evidence, sexual harassment can be inferred if the initiator has been accused of similar behaviour before (Herbert, 1994). In practice Herbert's suggestion may be difficult to institute. As mentioned earlier, it appears that not only is reporting of incidents low but also if they are reported and resolved through the informal route there will be no record of similar accusations. Therefore it can be argued that in practice many cases would lack this basis from which inferences can be made. Thus it could be argued that this practice effectively erases experiences as well as potential corroborative evidence. This lack of record-keeping may also function to create the impression that sexual harassment is rare (e.g. Gregory and Lees, 1999). Importantly, a decision at this stage that sexual harassment has not occurred due to insufficient evidence may serve to discredit the recipient and create the impression that the complaint was false. This may shape how the recipient is understood by the wider social network of which he or she is a part. For example, Gavey (2001, 2005) argues that dominant understandings of false complaints in rape cases represent men as in need of protection from lying scheming and vindictive women. This representation is echoed in Eisenman's (2002) work which represents men as frequent victims of a system that investigates false complaints made by women about sexual harassment. Thus the ways in which formal procedures are deployed and understood may also work to trivialise experiences.

### **3.10 Summary**

In this chapter, existing 'solutions' to the issue of sexual harassment have been delineated and evaluated. The ways in which formalised codes of practice and legislation are often treated as a complete and sufficient framework for bringing about an end to sexual harassment have been questioned. More specifically, I have explored the challenges posed by and limitations of these forms of redress with reference to how they may produce and reproduce dominant assumptions about gender and sexuality.

The question that could be asked at this point is how manifestations of sexual

harassment can be eliminated if the search for ultimate watertight solutions is abandoned. It should be noted that I am not arguing that policies and legislation are totally futile. Rather, I view such efforts as a necessary and important phase in the process of challenging such behaviour. Legal challenge against sexual harassment can be considered useful in terms of drawing attention to the unacceptability of this form of behaviour as well as providing a system of recourse. However, I would argue that to view the implementation of policy as essentially 'good' is simplistic. Instead, I suggest that perhaps a more fruitful approach is to open up understandings of how this issue should be dealt with to critical scrutiny (see Chapter 8). In the next chapter, I will introduce core theoretical and reflexive issues that shape and frame this project in general and data collection in particular.

## **Chapter 4: Locating the Project: Psychology, Power and the Production of Otherness**

### **4.1 *Introduction***

One issue I have sought to highlight in the preceding chapters is the ways in which the feminine often becomes othered in relation to the masculine. Broadly speaking, it has been noted that the femininised other routinely becomes problematised and positioned as subordinate in relation to normative masculinities within sexual harassment discourses. In this chapter, I shift focus somewhat to issues of otherness which impacted and shaped the development of this project. I begin by locating this research within the broader institution of psychology. More specifically, the positionings of this work as feminist, qualitative and ‘sensitive’ have predominantly been situated as other in relation to mainstream psychology. The othered status of these areas of study is reflected in the ways in which specific research concerns arising from such work are often marginalised within formal guidelines and advice. To illustrate this point, I discuss the limitations of the British Psychological Society’s guidelines on ethical conduct for dealing with issues that faced me in the production of this research. Lastly, the ways in which issues around otherness impacted participant relationships and recruitment in this project is reflexively considered.

### **4.2 *Feminism(s) as ‘Other’***

The location of this project within feminist theorisations positions this work more broadly within a complex, often turbulent relationship between feminism(s) and psychology. More specifically, feminist psychological work has simultaneously both influenced and been marginalised from the mainstream of the discipline. For example, feminist psychological perspectives on the centrality of gender in understanding and making sense of aspects of the social world are, to some extent, impacting mainstream psychology practice. As Burman (1998) points out:

“feminist critiques of the white, middle-class, male, rational, problem-solving subject of psychology are currently having some impact [on mainstream psychology]. This is reflected in academic psychology courses on gender and psychology, and especially the



‘psychology of women’, and in the statutory sector of health and welfare provision with the funding and organisation of specialist services for women, including women’s therapy centres” (p. 1).

However, the success of feminist critiques of problematic mainstream psychological thinking is curtailed by the ways in which feminist psychologies are variously positioned as a ‘special’ interest (Marecek, 1995) “optional extra” (Burman, 1998: p. 1), and as ‘other’ in relation to the mainstream.

Wilkinson (1997) notes three exclusionary practices operating within psychology which has functioned to ‘other’ feminist psychologies. According to Wilkinson (1997), these practices include: (1) physical exclusion and hostility, (2) exclusion by definition and, (3) exclusion by liberal rhetoric. The first of these practices refers to the physical exclusion of women in general and feminist psychologists in particular from the mainstream. Wilkinson (1997) argues that physical exclusion manifests in women’s minimal representation in academic and practice posts in the psychological profession. For example, Wilkinson (1997) suggests that while women outnumber men on undergraduate psychology courses, men tend to outnumber women in the academic psychology faculty as well as in other higher level posts such as senior positions within clinical psychology (see also Blaine, 2007). Wilkinson (1997) argues that this inequality in women’s representation in psychology is underpinned by a wide range of practices including, negative or gender-biased representation of women in many mainstream textbooks and minimal representation of women in senior membership grades on the BPS. It should be noted that Wilkinson (1997) does not appear to equate women in general with feminism or feminist psychologies. Rather, the argument presented here suggests that women’s general exclusion from the mainstream coupled with problematic representations of women within the literature make it difficult to get feminist issues on the agenda and taken seriously because women and issues related to them are othered in this process of exclusion.

The second practice of marginalisation discussed by Wilkinson (1997) – exclusion by definition – centres on epistemological concerns of what legitimately counts as psychological knowledge. According to Wilkinson (1997), the

thoroughly politicised position(s) of feminism(s) are constructed as at odds with psychology as an objective science. Thus, by drawing on a series of dichotomies – political/non-political, subjective/objective, science/non-science – feminist work can be legitimately excluded from the mainstream because it does not produce ‘objective’ knowledge. The possibility that subjective bias on the basis of gender, race, disabilities and so on may operate within psychology is defused by recourse to the ways in which psychology operates in accordance to non-discriminatory stances, policy and law. Wilkinson (1997) argues that such arguments often draw on the ‘exclusion by liberal rhetoric’ which refers to the ways in which psychological institutions such as the BPS draw on liberal conceptualisations such as non-discrimination, meritocracy and equal opportunities to deflect political challenges made by feminist work to the mainstream.

The legitimacy of feminist knowledges in psychology is called into question by these various processes of marginalisation. The positioning of feminist psychologies as Other may mean that feminist knowledges are trivialised, not engaged with and/or misunderstood by mainstream researchers. To de-marginalise feminist informed work, to legitimise feminist knowledges, “to make effective interventions in mainstream psychology, to have an impact through journals, books and conferences, then...[feminist psychologists] have to engage (to varying degrees) with the mainstream” (Wilkinson, 1997b: p. 248). This engagement can be costly with politicised messages being downplayed and/or lost (Wilkinson, 1997b).

#### **4.3 *Qualitative methodologies as ‘Other’***

Like feminist influences in psychology, qualitative methodologies have also occupied a marginal position in relation to mainstream psychology. The outsider status of qualitative methods in psychology is intimately bound with psychology’s own history as ‘other’ in relation to the ‘hard’ sciences of biology, chemistry and physics. In its pursuit of recognition as a ‘proper’ science, hypothetico-deductive, quantitative methods of knowledge production became positioned as normative within psychology. Whilst qualitative methodologies have always been used within the discipline, they have been variously othered as ‘soft’ and ‘unscientific’

(e.g. Griffin and Phoenix, 1994) and trivialised as an “an intellectual flirtation” (Kidder and Fine, 1997, p.35). Thus, the positioning of qualitative and quantitative methods as polar opposites draws on a series of dichotomies such as objective/subjective, rational/irrational and science/non-science which function to position qualitative methods as the subordinate other.

Capdevila (2003) points out the presentation of quantitative and qualitative methodologies as a dichotomy is problematic because it relies on a series of potentially misleading distinctions between the two methodologies. As a case in point, Capdevila (2003) discuss the ways in which quantitative analysis is presented as a macro-level exploration which is positioned as a polar opposite to the micro-level analysis of qualitative psychology. She argues that “the assumption that an analysis requires only two levels, and that methodologies should occupy one of these, is highly contentious and unnecessarily constricting” (p. 7).

The positioning of qualitative methods as non-science calls in to question the legitimacy of qualitative work as ‘proper’ psychological knowledge. Thus, as with feminist psychological work mentioned above, those using qualitative methodologies have been faced with the task of establishing such work as credible knowledge. Within debates of the qualitative/quantitative divide, some arguments attempting to legitimise qualitative methodologies in relation to mainstream psychology have drawn attention to the ‘sameness’ between some qualitative and quantitative methods. This can be seen in Capdevila’s (2003) discussion of discursive strategies deployed in the qualitative/quantitative debate which construct similarities between the ‘two’ methodologies. For example, some methodologies such as Q methodology have been positioned as a bridge between qualitative and quantitative methodologies (e.g. Sell and Brown, 1984). As Capdevila (2003) notes, Q methodology has been described as a flexible technique which can be used within constructionist or realist frameworks and as combining “the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research traditions” (Dennis and Goldberg, 1996, p. 104). Capdevila and Lazard (2006) argue that the appeal to sameness used in such arguments functions to position such

methodologies as legitimate *in relation* to the mainstream. However, this strategy does not question the dichotomous relationship between qualitative and quantitative methodologies on which it is premised.

Legitimising strategies which draw on notions of sameness and ‘difference’ between quantitative and qualitative approaches are undoubtedly politically useful in terms of getting qualitative methodologies on psychology’s agenda. However, as argued above, the credibility of qualitative approaches depends on its *relationship* with mainstream quantitative methodologies. As with the case of feminism(s)’ engagement with psychology mentioned above, the relationship between qualitative and quantitative approaches can impose constraints around issues of methodological and theoretical acceptability for qualitative research as engagement depends on the negotiation of normative practices in mainstream research. Such constraints may function to “limit a method’s usefulness in terms of interpretative power and theoretical authenticity and, as a result, methodologically” (Capdevila, 2003, p. 9). Thus, the potential cost of de-marginalisation is limitation and regulation by mainstream norms of knowledge production.

#### **4.4 Sensitive Research as ‘Other’**

The above issues and implications around norms of knowledge production also impact sensitive research projects. The sensitive research project has been variously defined in psychology (Lee, 1993). For example, projects which could potentially fall under the rubric of sensitive research include studies which focus on socially taboo subjects such as sex and sexualities and or studies which are intrusive in the sense that it impinges on “areas which are private, stressful or sacred” (Lee, 1993, p. 4) or which pose potential threat or cost to those who have been involved in it (e.g. Renzetti and Lee, 1993). Sensitive research may also include that which challenges particular political alignments, “if political is taken in its widest sense to refer to the vested interests of powerful persons or institutions” (Lee, 1993, p. 4). The positioning of research issues as socially taboo, risky and/or politicised in some way functions to position such research as problematic and, often, illegitimate. For example, research on sex, sexuality and

sexual violence has often been viewed as lacking rigor (Tiefer, 1995), stigmatised (Israel, 2002) and/or embarrassing (Braun, 1999).

The stigmatisation of some sensitive research topics such as sex may function to locate the research and researcher in problematic positionings in the broader social context (e.g. Zurbriggen, 2002). This can be seen in Israel's (2002) account of her research on women strippers. More specifically, she describes the ways in which she was unprepared for the reactions of others in her social network to her work and subsequently to her. For example, she argues that "my identity became fused with my research project, as if 'she does work on strippers' was my last name" (p. 257). For Israel, the immediate disclosure to others of aspects of her professional identity was often marked with titillation, amusement and a sense of voyeurism. This not only often led to the belittlement of her work but also to a sense of lack of control around the display and presentation of aspects of her working identity.

Israel (2002) argues her work on women strippers did not solely impact contexts outside her working life but also within it. The positioning of sex research as entertaining and titillating can function to undermine the credibility of such work as serious research.

According to Lee (1993), the positioning of sex-related research as illegitimate is also reflected in wider employment issues for those doing this kind of work. More specifically, Lee (1993) argues that sex-related research has been fraught with professional risk in the form of career disadvantage. For example, some job and/or opportunities may become difficult to access because institutions and/or administrators may wish to dissociate themselves from taboo, difficult or controversial issues associated with sex research. Lee (1993) also notes that sex-related work often transcends disciplinary boundaries functioning to locate it as 'specialised' which again might limit access to job opportunities. In addition to this, the location of such work as transdisciplinary may also work to position such research as distinct from 'pure' psychology which functions to distance such work further from norms around 'proper' or 'acceptable' psychological knowledge.

#### **4.5     *Negotiating Marginality***

The positioning of this thesis as feminist-informed, as qualitative and as sensitive is important because the relationship between these marginalised areas of scholarly activity and mainstream psychology have implications for the research process. More specifically, feminist, qualitative and sensitive research each raises particular concerns and issues around ethics, participant-researcher relations and power relationships therein. However, as I will argue, since these areas of study occupy a marginalised position in relation to the mainstream, crucial issues associated with research practices in these areas are often not clearly reflected in official guidelines and advice on how to conduct research.

#### **4.6     *‘Professional’ research conduct***

The advice given by the British Psychological Society on how to conduct ethical research is central throughout the research process. Given that the current project also falls in the area of sensitive research, I also looked at resources specifically tailored to conducting sensitive work prior to data collection for this study. Unsurprisingly, doing ethically sensitive research was depicted as a particularly thorny issue with difficulties emerging from the outset. For example, Lee (1993) argues that defining a project as ‘sensitive is fraught with difficulties, not least of which is the ways in which “different social groups attribute different meanings to requests for participation in research, it may well be that a study seen as threatening by one group will be thought innocuous by another” (p. 5). There are two interrelated points I would like to raise in relation to this quote. Firstly, the problem of sensitive research is located in the realms of the subjective rather than in the study itself; the way in which it is *seen* by participants is constituted as the issue. Secondly, there is a sense in this quote that the researcher lacks control over how the study is seen. The researcher within this process is positioned within a quagmire of conflicting subjectivities, which are constructed as difficult to foresee and negotiate. Overall, there is the sense that it is the participant that is the problem here.

Interestingly, within Lee’s argument (1993), the researcher’s subjective understandings of an issue are constructed within a discourse of professionalism.

For example, Lee (1993) comments that:

“it is not unusual, for example, for the sensitive nature of an apparently innocuous topic to become apparent once the research is underway, nor for a researcher to approach a topic with caution only to find initial fears about its sensitivity have been misplaced”  
(p. 5)

In the first part of this quote – “it is not unusual ... for the sensitive nature of an apparently innocuous topic to become apparent” – there is no sense of the researcher in this process, there is no sense of their realisation of sensitivity, no sense of how or why this was missed during initial conceptualisations of the issue or in the planning of the research. Again, the “sensitive nature” of the topic is constructed as difficult to predict through the description of it as becoming “apparent”. It is suggested that the issue becomes sensitive when participants become involved in the study as implied by the description of it only becoming “apparent once the research is underway”. Again, this construction works to position the participants rather than the researcher as the ‘problem’. The researcher throughout this quote is positioned as an ethical professional – they abide by ethical rules and are sometimes over-“cautious” when it comes to ensuring ethical treatment of participants. The participant is also constructed as different to the researcher in terms of emotionality. The participant is constructed as subjective and emotional – they may or may not feel “threatened” – whereas their personal sense of the researcher is limited, emotions such as ‘fear’ are displaced through the research process whereby they “*find*” that their concerns are ‘misplaced’. In this sense, the researcher is positioned as objective. Taken together, the constructions described in Lee’s (1993) argument constitute the researcher as fair and just and thus less blameable for the possible negative consequences of sensitive research on participants.

The ways in which ethics becomes constructed with professional discourses can be seen in the British Psychological Society’s (BPS) set of ethical guidelines (2006). Indeed, the opening paragraph of these guidelines states that:

“The British Psychological Society ... recognises its obligation to set and uphold the highest standards of professionalism, and to promote ethical behaviour, attitudes and judgements on the part of psychologists” (p. 1)

Here, through the use of formal regulatory tone, the professionalism is constructed as neutral, authoritative and superior. Within this construction, ethical issues are constituted as a matter of professional identity – to be a ‘good’ professional psychologist you must be ethical. This construction of ethics works to prioritize it as a professional issue over emotionality. Indeed, the formalised language used serves to depoliticise and de-emotionalise the question of ethical practice in psychological research.

The depoliticised, de-emotionalised construction of the professional psychologist is in keeping with the broad positioning of the researcher in mainstream psychology, that is, objective, neutral and unbiased. Indeed, within the guidelines, the participant is constructed within individualistic discourses of mainstream psychology which position “everything relevant to the actions of a person...to have been found a place within” (Harre, 1989: 34). To illustrate this point, I will draw from one section of the guidelines which describes “the standard of protection for research participants” (BPS, 2006: 18). Whilst all ethical guidelines are relevant to research in general and sensitive research in particular, this section is a notable concern for those researching sensitive topics because it deals with protecting the participant from harm during the research process.

The construction of the participants as, to a greater or lesser extent, a bounded entity is reflected in the kind of harm from which psychological ethical practice should protect its participants from. More specifically, the guidelines state that “psychologists should consider all research from the standpoint of research participants, for the purpose of eliminating potential risks to psychological well-being, physical health, personal values, or dignity” (BPS, 2006, p. 18). Here, risk for participants is constituted as potential harm to subjective, internal inner states. This conceptualisation of the person is re-produced further in the following



description in which the guidelines state that:

“psychologists should ... undertake such consideration with due concern for the potential effects of, for example, age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, marital or family status, or sexual orientation, seeking consultation as needed from those knowledgeable about such effects”

In this quote, issues such as age, disability and so on are constructed as variables which is accomplished through the description of the possible “effects” they might cause. Taken together, this construction of the participant distracts attention from the ways in which the individual is thoroughly embedded within the cultural practices, contexts, relationships and communities in which they are variously positioned.

The construction of various positionings as variables works to undermine or obscure the ways in which they are politicised aspects of people’s experience. The ways in which this BPS document focuses on the risk of harm to the *individual* participant can be seen further in description of the need to “ask participants [about] ... individual factors that might reasonably lead to risk of harm”, of the need to “refrain from using financial compensation ... for research participants to risk harm” (BPS, 2006, p. 18) and to inform participants of ethical rights such as their right to withdraw. What is missing in this document is explicit reference to the need to consider the wider ethical issues of knowledge production which includes the broader implications that a research study has for particular groups, communities and institutions. As Sieber and Stanley (1988) note, ‘seemingly innocuous research’ can have far reaching political consequences, “for example, a study that examines the relative merits of day care for infants against full-time care by the mother can have broad social implications and thus can be considered socially sensitive. Similarly, studies aimed at examining the relation between gender and mathematical ability also have significant social implications” (p. 49).

Mainstream psychology's disengagement with broader ethical issues of knowledge production appears to be related, at least in part, to the need to pin down 'fuzzy' concepts and to operationalise and measure phenomena in some way. This is reflected in Lee's (1993) response to Sieber and Stanley's argument in which Lee agrees with the need to assess wider social implications of research, but argues that:

“the difficulty is that Sieber and Stanley do not do not *specify the scope or nature* of the kinds of consequences or implications they have in mind. Their definition, [of socially sensitive research] therefore, logically encompasses research that is consequential in any way” (p. 3).

In line with Brown, (1997), I would posit that arguments such as Lee's (1993) above, draw on and are bounded by dominant norms of ethics as prescribed by mainstream quantitative research. These norms do not address ethical issues raised in research informed by different theoretical and epistemological positions such as qualitative and/or feminist informed research (e.g. Brown, 1997) nor are required to consider the politicised consequences of knowledge production in mainstream psychology.

In the context of this project, the ways in which ethics, the psychologist and participants are constructed in the BPS guidelines had a number of implications for setting up and running this research. On a broad level, I would argue that the construction of the ethical professional psychologist in these guidelines draws on and reproduces masculinised assumptions imbued in predominant representations of science and professionalism in general. For example, rationality and objectivity are core to hegemonic forms of masculinity which predominantly feature in representations of professionalism and science (e.g. Whitehead, 2001). Given that, in this research, I attempt to deconstruct gendered binaries of masculine-feminine and associated dualities and make my subjective positioning in this project explicit, I find myself located in ways that I do not easily fit nor are comfortable with.

My relationships with participants were often not best described as a psychologist-‘client’ relation as constituted in the BPS ethical guidelines. The use of the term client often depicts a professional business relationship (p. 5) and in psychology has connotations of therapy. My relationships with participants were more complex and ‘messy’ than alluded to by descriptions of the psychologist-client relation. There were points of similarity and difference between myself and the participants along a number of fault lines, including gender, sexualities, ‘race’, age and class to name but a few. As argued above, these points of convergence and divergence are not simply ‘variables’ which can be ‘controlled’ for during the research process but complex, variously-intersecting positionings which shape and (re)produce not only particular power relations between researcher and researched but also the co-construction of the research process as a whole.

In discussing aspects of researcher-participant relationships that I feel are pertinent to the development of this project, I am also concerned about and wish to avoid drawing artificial boundaries around particular ‘groups’ of participants, as if ‘men’, ‘women’ and so on are homogenous, static categories. Instead, I would stress that similarities and differences between myself and the participants were fluid, changing and contextualised differently during moments of interaction as the research process unfolded. To make the complexity of the researcher-participant relation in this study explicit, the following sections will draw attention to the ways in which my participants and I were variously positioned in and impacted on the research process.

#### ***4.7 Researching Others: Relationships and Representation***

The complexities of negotiating otherness within the research process have been well-documented (e.g. Bhavnani, 1988; Opie, 1992; Finlay and Gough, 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Broadly speaking, the location of the researcher as “ultimately in the (powerful) position of taking charge of the participants’ accounts, producing interpretations and presenting her own interpretations as ‘academic research findings’” (Del Busso, 2007, p. 312) has raised concerns around the researcher’s ‘right’ to speak either for or about those who are variously othered. According to Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996), within

feminist theorising, concerns around representing others stem from a tendency in early feminist work to homogenise and universalise women's experiences which ignored important differences and power differentials between women. As Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) point out, within such early work "what is passed off as 'our' experience all too often turns out to be the common and unproblematised knowledge only of white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual Anglo-Americans" (p. 566).

The ways in which the researcher may occupy a privileged position in relation to participants, not only in terms of their status as academic, but also along other power differentials such as race, class, ablebodiedness, sexualities and so on may mean that important aspects of the experience of others becomes misrepresented, minimised or ignored. Just as the assumption of 'sameness' between women can (re)produce dominant-subordinate relations between self and other, strategies highlighting 'differences' between women can be equally problematic. For example, as Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996) note, one strategy employed in some feminist work to circumvent issues around homogenisation of women as well as challenging the pathologisation of others has been to 'celebrate' differences. However, the 'celebration' of differences may lead to positioning those others as exotic and/or exaggerating the heroic or tragic aspects of the experiences of those deemed less powerful. As Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1996) argue, "the danger lies in romanticising others and in using our representation of them to delineate 'our' vision of the Good Life" (p. 13).

Issues around Sameness and Difference became relevant within various points of the research process in this project. In the following sections, I will discuss two experiences during participant recruitment where the process of Othering was particularly salient. These experiences were concerned with my positionings as a heterosexual woman researcher working with (1) heterosexual men participants and (2) LGBT participants.

#### **4.8 *We are different? Working with heterosexual men participants***

Predominant concerns around othering within the research process generally centre on privileged positionings of the researcher in relation to less powerful

others. However, as Wilmot (1997) notes, “there are many contexts in which the dynamics of this power relationship become more complex and contradictory” (p. 176), where shifting relations of power may locate the researcher as other during particular interactions during the research process. For example, it has been noted that women (feminist) researchers working with (heterosexual) male participants may become othered because of the location of the researcher and researched in a gendered system of power relations in which the feminised occupies a subordinate position in relation to the masculinised (e.g. Marzano, 2007).

The gendering of women academics in research contexts more generally is produced and reproduced in the ways in which gender can become privileged over professional status in the research encounter as well as in the feminisation of aspects of the research process itself. For example, Wilmot (1997) argues that in the research context, women academics are often seen as more emotional than men, as listeners, as less threatening and less powerful than their male counterparts. Moreover, Wilmot (1997) suggests that textbook advice on maintaining and managing researcher-researched relationships often becomes intimately interwoven with representations of ‘feminised’ behaviour. For example, advice on the need to establish rapport with participants often alludes to the need for emotional labour in this interaction – a job that has traditionally been seen as women’s work (e.g. Hochschild, 2003). Thus, being a ‘good’ researcher also depends on women locating themselves in traditionally feminine ways. As Wilmot (1997) points out, for feminist women researchers working with heterosexual male participants, such advice is problematic because many feminist researchers wish to challenge gendered power relations underpinning traditional feminised-masculinised ways of being.

In this project, my positioning as woman perhaps became more relevant, salient and visible when recruiting and working with men participants because the focus of my interactions with them was to discuss the gendered/sexualised topic of sexual harassment. For example, one way in which my positioning as woman became salient was through heterosexist joking either when being introduced to

potential participants or direct interaction between myself and participants. For example, I was once playfully introduced as “the feminist who’s interested in sex”, which I felt undermined my position as a researcher, my political values and my research focus. I was also asked jokingly by two potential participants if I planned to ‘sexually harass’ them or if I had asked them to participate because they were ‘sexperts’. Like Israel’s (2002) experiences of doing work on strippers mentioned above, I found that my work in these contexts was often constituted as titillating and a bit of a joke.

It should be noted that I am not suggesting that ‘heterosexism’ and ‘men’ should be coupled as an inevitable given or that by outlining these particular experiences I am presupposing that women do not engage in various forms of heterosexism. Rather, the point of this illustration is to explore the ways in which gendered power dynamics intersect with the researcher-researched relationship to (re)produce myself as researcher as the feminised/hetero-sexualised other.

My experiences of such behaviour are best described by a ‘prepared unpreparedness’. I was prepared in the sense that I had initially decided to gently challenge viewpoints that I found to be politically problematic – a strategy for dealing with issues around difference in researcher-participant relationships suggested by Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997). However, the practicalities of engaging in this strategy were less straightforward. I did not want to reinforce stereotypical versions of feminists as opinionated or difficult or be complicit in heterosexism (see also Braun, 2000). Nor did I want to undermine or alienate individuals who had previously been supportive and helpful in my work. To handle such encounters, I often adopted humour to defuse situations, which resonates with particular strategies employed by women to resist sexual harassment (e.g. Mott and Condor, 1997; see also Chapter 1). However, I was often left with the feeling of dissatisfaction in my strategies for handling such interactions, a feeling that I should have done more to resist but feeling utterly limited in the routes I could take.

#### **4.9     *We are the same? Working with LGBT Participants***

Particular experiences in the participant recruitment phase also drew attention to assumptions of ‘sameness’ operating in my own strategies for accessing participants. For example, during the early stages of participant recruitment, I organised a meeting with a LGBT community group to discuss the project and informally gauge any interest from members around possible participation. Whilst members appeared happy to informally talk with me about my work, they were all unwilling to take part. This experience made me reflect on my own assumptions around sexualities as well as my approach to gaining access to participants. I realised that my own liberal ideals around inclusion had led to ‘sexuality-blind’ assumptions being incorporated in my approach to recruitment. I had not really been prepared for this unwillingness to participate because I had not fully considered the impact of my own heterosexualised positioning in this context – I had assumed that the differences between us would not be as a problem.

My general unawareness of my own privileged positioning in relation to this group is reflected in my lack of consideration over certain issues. For example, it had not occurred to me to think about disclosing my position as a *heterosexual* researcher. In hindsight, I realise that this may have been an important issue in some individuals’ decisions to enter into the research process.

In this meeting, my outsider status was made salient through the ways in which I had chosen to engage with this group – I was unknown to this community group prior to the meeting and the discussion was focused on *my* work, *my* agenda, *my* objectives. As Pitman (2002) notes in her participant recruitment experiences of being a white researcher doing work with racialised participants, the narrow focus on one’s own research agenda may lead to insensitive strategies being used for obtaining participants. In her research, Pitman (2002) describes the ways in which her over-enthusiasm for her work, lead her to adopt ‘railroad’ strategies for participant recruitment which skimmed over issues of otherness and were ultimately unsuccessful.

Pitman (2002) argues that building trusted alliances with others, taking time to understand the perspectives of others that one’s research may impact on may aid the production of more collaborative-based research endeavours. Like Pitman’s

early experiences, my initial approach could also be interpreted as insensitive as I had not taken the time to build such alliances, I did not have a clear sense of what was important to these individuals, and my implicit sexuality-blind approach ignored and (re)produced the ways in which LGBT issues are routinely marginalised more generally (e.g. Lasenza, 2008; Kaplan, 2008; Monro, 2005).

#### **4.10 *Negotiating Otherness***

Reflection on the above experiences made me question my decision to recruit those located in othered positions in relation to myself. As mentioned above, one strategy to avoid problematic interactional dynamics and representational concerns more generally is to study people like ‘us’ (e.g. Letherby, 2003). However, I would argue that this strategy is fraught with a number of difficulties, not least of which is where boundaries should be drawn – the positionings of individual participants in relation to myself were littered with points of similarity and difference, all of which may produce particular power issues in the researcher-researched relationship (Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 1996).

In asking this question, I also became concerned about (re)producing otherness. The complexity of this issue is captured by a playful comment made by an acquaintance in a discussion I had with her on this issue – “are you saying I can’t have a say [in the project] just because I’m a lesbian?”. In exploring the question of recruiting Others, I took the stance that there is no easy solution to power issues around identities and positionings of myself and participants in the research process. Indeed, I would argue that our similarities and differences with participants is not something that can be ‘solved’ but rather requires continual critical reflective engagement throughout the research process (Coyle, 1996). As Pitman points out:

“power hierarchies are always being created and maintained throughout the research process ... power is not an absolute but instead a dynamic, ever-changing and potentially insidious force that serves to create and maintain hierarchies. The identities we claim, the aspects of our identities we choose to highlight or downplay, all have the potential to shift the relationship of power in the



research process, increase or diminish awareness, and either uphold or dismantle existing power hierarchies. Clearly, the question is not whether our identities and practices affect these relationships or hierarchies, but *how* they do so” (pp. 286-287).

#### **4.11 Summary**

This chapter has explored how the broad theoretical and methodological stances taken up in this project have been located as marginal in relation to mainstream psychology. I have sought to explicate how the positioning of this work as other works to minimise specific ethical concerns around knowledge production within official advice and guidelines on doing research within psychology. I then examined how notions of sameness and difference operated within my relationships with participants to (re)produce myself or my participants as other. Reflective engagement with issues of otherness and power in researcher-participant relationships in this project is not intended to function as a disclaimer for the (re)production of gendered/sexualised power relationships in this research. Rather I have tried to open up these power relations for critical scrutiny and describe how I attempted to work with positionings of sameness/difference in the process of knowledge production.

Having now described broad issues around power and otherness that became relevant to the collection of data for this project, the following chapter will provide a more detailed description of methodologies employed to collect and analyse data collected. The next chapter extends the discussion of power and otherness presented here by drawing attention to how such issues frame particular methodological choices made in this work.

## **Chapter 5: Methodologies**

### **5.1 *Introduction***

The broad concern of this thesis is to explore and explicate the function and implications of a range of versions of the issue of sexual harassment. To do this, I ran three studies to collect: (1) narratives focused on understandings of sexual harassment; (2) narratives on sexual harassment policy interventions; and, (3) constructions of the issue of unwanted sexual attention more generally and recipient-initiator relations therein. Two Q methodological studies were conducted to collect and analyse narrative data. To explore constructions of unwanted sexual attention, I carried out a series of one-to-one interviews which were analysed using Foucauldian discourse analysis. In this chapter, the design and implementation of each of these studies will be described in turn, along with analytical considerations. Throughout this chapter, particular theoretical and methodological implications which frame these studies will be discussed.

### **5.2 *Q Methodology***

Q methodology was first developed by Stephenson (1935) and has been described and used as conceptual framework and analytical procedure for the exploration of subjectivity, as a means through which subjective or contestable issues can be studied and as a tool for examining social problems and related solutions (Brown, 1980; Kitzinger, 1987; Curt, 1990; Stainton Rogers, 1991; Senn, 1996; Stenner and Marshall, 1995; Capdevila, 1999; Jordan, Capdevila and Johnson, 2005).

The development of Q methodology is grounded in a broader critique of hypothetico-deductive logic as well as to address the lack of focus within psychology on “its proper subject matter: subjectivity” (Watts and Stenner, 2005, p. 71). As Watts and Stenner (2005) note, Stephenson was concerned about the emphasis on hypothetico-deductive forms of hypothesis formulation, measurement and testing of psychological phenomena. More specifically, it appears that Stephenson viewed measurement and testing as premature in psychology because the discipline “has by no means achieved a sophisticated theoretical status, with ideal constructs such as physics has fashioned for itself. The situations in psychology, therefore, call for an attitude of curiosity” (1953,

p. 151).

This “attitude of curiosity” (Stephenson, 1953, p. 151) is reflected in the operation of Q methodology as an exploratory method. Unlike hypothetico-deductive driven psychometrics, the aim of Q methodology is not to ‘test’ its participants, measure variables or support/reject hypotheses. Rather, the focus of Q is on holistic patterns, variously-labelled viewpoints, perspectives or narratives, which are expressed and shared by specific groups of participants. To clarify and contextualise the way in which Q methodology represents a methodological departure from traditional forms of psychological testing, it is necessary to outline the process of Q methodology which can be conceptualised as four interrelated phases: (1) Item sampling; (2) Q sorting; (3) statistical analysis; and, (4) factor interpretation. These phases will be addressed in turn in the following section.

### **5.3    *Practically Q***

Q methodology is typically concerned with the manifold of perspectives that can be taken up in relation to a particular topic of debate. Therefore, the Q sample most commonly comprises of a set of statements which variously express the range of issues and considerations which may become relevant to given perspectives on the issue under study. It is the multiple, varied expressions on or about particular topics which Stephenson (1978) referred to as a concourse of communicability. Given that the statements will be used to map multiple perspectives on an issue, the sample of statements needs to represent the diversity of propositions relevant to the topic under consideration. Thus, statements are generally collected from a number of sources such as academic literature, literary and popular texts (e.g. television programmes, magazines, newspaper articles and so on), informal discussions, interviews and so on (e.g. Stainton Rogers, 1991; Stainton Rogers, 1995; Watts and Stenner, 2005). The aim of this sampling process is to ensure that the final set of statements represents issues that can be drawn on in relation to a given topic.

Since the Q sample comprises of statements rather than participants, the focus of Q is on “discourses not the individual or any intra-psychic essence they may or may not possess” (Capdevila, 2006; Stainton Rogers, 1995). This

conceptualisation of sampling is grounded within the notion of finite diversity which assumes that perspectives on a given issue are neither singular nor entirely unique to each individual. Rather, what is produced when “people are applied to a sample of elements ... [is] the expression of several (say 4-15) ordered patterns of cultural understanding” (Stainton Rogers, 1995, p. 180). Participant selection is thus geared around facilitating the expression of such diversity which may include recruiting participants who have specialised, professional or other forms of direct experience with the research issue. However, the inclusion of participants who have no particular or direct interest in the topic can also aid “hearing the unexpected; exposing whether certain knowledges are uniquely ‘expert’; and general ‘democratic’ or ‘emancipatory’ ideals” (Stainton Rogers, 1995, p. 180).

These patterns of cultural understanding are initially expressed through the process of Q sorting which involves participants rank ordering statements along a scale ranging from statements that most represent a particular perspective of the issue (for example, most agree +6) through to those statements that least represent the perspective (for example, most disagree –6). Typically, an 11 or 13 point rank scale is used which range from, for example most agree (+5 or +6) through to uncertain (0) to most disagree (–5 or –6) (Watts and Stenner, 2005). This sorting procedure generally takes place on a quasi normally distributed grid. The process of assigning statements to rank positions culminates in the expression of a particular perspective on the issue being studied. Important to note, is that this ranking exercise can be clearly distinguished from the process of responding to items or statements in traditional questionnaires or attitude scales. This is because in such traditional methods the meaning of participants’ responses to such items has already been predetermined (Brown, 1980). In contrast, Q methodology does not assign a priori meanings to responses. Agreement and disagreement responses in Q become meaningful in the context of the positionings of all other statements in the final array. As Capdevila (2006) argues, what is constituted as meaningful in the process of Q sorting is the relative evaluation of importance of statements from the participant’s perspective. The result of this process is a gestalt patterning of statements and it is these configurations which comprise the data set.

The emphasis on gestalt patterns of response is not the only way in which Q differs from traditional means of obtaining response data. Q's point of methodological departure lies in an inversion of the statistical technique, factor analysis. In its conventional form, factor analysis is used to detect associations between variables. For example, the statistical procedure is designed to look for associations between variable A and variable B. In contrast to this, Stephenson inverted the statistical procedure to detect associations between patterns expressed by persons. For example, associations identified in Q methodology will be between the patterns expressed by person A and person B. As Watts and Stenner (2005) note "as a consequence of these changes, it is also persons (not tests, traits or other types of variables) that load onto emergent factors of an inverted factor analytic study (p. 72). The factors produced in Q methodology denote Q sorts which share similar rank orderings of items or pattern configurations. A weighted average of Q sorts which load highly on a factor can be used to create a pattern configuration which exemplifies a given factor. It is this exemplifying Q sort which is then interpreted through a discursive reading of statements and their rank positions in the context of all others in the final array.

#### **5.4    *Locating Q***

The use of statistics in the identification of discursive gestalt patterns makes Q a highly unusual and distinctive methodological tool. However, its use of both quantitative and qualitative methods has produced difficulties in locating Q within methodological traditions and, as Watts and Stenner (2005) point out, has led to misconceptions and misrepresentations of this technique. For example, the positioning of Q as neither positivist nor hypothetico-deductive situates it within the margins of mainstream quantitative research. However, Q's use of quantitative procedures has been "sufficient ground for dismissal as 'another atomising numerology' in the eyes of some qualitative researchers" (Stenner and Stainton Rogers, 2004, p. 101). Similarly, Watts and Stenner (2005) suggest that the Q's use of statistics underpins the misrepresentation of Q methodology by some strands of qualitative work as a more mainstream aligned process of knowledge production involving conventional forms of variable relationship identification

and measurement.

The dismissal of Q by some researchers working within qualitative traditions may not only be based in its outward appearance as a more conventional quantitative method but also through the proposition that it does not offer anything vastly different or alternative to other forms of qualitative analysis (Watts and Stenner, 2005). Watts and Stenner (2005) counter this argument by highlighting the ways in which Q can offer a distinct contribution to existing forms of qualitative methods of analyses available. More specifically, they point out that Q differs from forms of thematic and discursive analyses because the gestalt emphasis in Q does not lend itself to identifying patterns in a thematic fashion. However, it should be noted that this does not presuppose themes cannot be identified across exemplifying Q configurations. Rather, Watts and Stenner argue that the focus on holistic patterns in Q resonates with narrative forms of analysis (e.g. Crossley, 2000). The link between Q and narrative analysis can be made when Q configurations are conceptualised as narratives composed of manifold discourses (e.g. Stainton Rogers, 1992).

However, Q is not the same as narrative analysis as can be seen in the ways in which these methodologies diverge. More specifically, Watts and Stenner (2005) argue that unlike Q, narrative analysis is usually applied to what has been referred to as “naturally occurring discourse” (Watts and Stenner, 2005: 71). Whilst Watts and Stenner (2005) acknowledge that whilst the Q sorting process can be read as problematic because analysis is not working with ‘natural’ talk/text, they counter this by suggesting that the description of some data as ‘natural’ is questionable. As Speer (2005) argues “*all* [discursive] data can be natural or contrived depending on what one wants to *do* with it” (p. 196). Watts and Stenner (2005) suggest that Q can also be distinguished from narrative analysis in terms of temporality. More specifically narrative analysis is concerned with the temporal structure of stories which yields insights to the function of chronologically organised narrative accounts (see, for example Crossley, 2000). In contrast, the narratives produced through Q methodology can be described as a “‘snapshot’ or temporally frozen image of a connected series of subject positions (or

viewpoints)” (Watts and Stenner, 2005, p. 71) which can be explored in terms of their function and implications

As aforementioned, in the identification of narratives, Q does not presuppose that unidimensional or polarised positionings will be taken up in relation to a given issue. Instead, Q focuses on multiplicity which is reflected in the ways in which it can make manifest both more marginalised as well as dominant narratives that are in circulation in the current cultural context. According to Capdevila (2006), this feature of Q marks it as distinctive in relation to most other quantitative and qualitative approaches. More specifically, Capdevila (2006) argues in mainstream quantitative approaches such as surveys, marginalised perspectives tend to disappear from view through the processes of averaging across demographic variables. In a similar vein, Capdevila (2006) notes that the general aim of qualitative approaches is to identify dominant discourses or themes. In contrast, Q has no such aims and instead “treats all perspectives equally” (Capdevila, 2006, p 8) which makes possible the identification of marginalised and dominant narratives.

### **5.5     *The Q studies***

The rationale for using Q in this thesis is broadly based on its ability to make manifest the multiplicity of complex narratives that can be taken up in relation to the issue of sexual harassment. In this thesis, two Q studies were conducted which focused on: (1) understandings of what constitutes sexual harassment and, (2) policy issues. In both studies, materials used to complete the Q process were posted to participants and their contribution was sent back via stamped addressed envelope. While postal studies using Q are not uncommon, the completion of the Q process which is likely to be unfamiliar to participants might be considered daunting (e.g. Senn, 1996). For this reason, participants were given the option of having the researcher present either for initial verbal guidance or for the duration of Q sorting. Some participants did request this option. In the following sections each Q study will be addressed in turn. Each description will begin with the rationale for employing Q to explore particular research issues before moving on to the specific design and procedural features of each study.

### **5.6 *Q study 1: Call It What You Want?***

The first study to be described here focused on understandings of the term ‘sexual harassment’ that are available in the current cultural context. The basis for this study is grounded within arguments around the issue of non-labelling discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, I argued that within the labelling literature, research has focused predominantly on the issue of non-labelling. Discussion of what constitutes sexual harassment in victim accounts is limited, with non-labelling being read as normalising problematic gendered/sexualised acts. Given that versions of sexual harassment may shape and constrain the ways in which gendered acts are constructed, it would seem pertinent to explore the various ways in which sexual harassment is understood in the current cultural context. It is this concern with the multiplicity of understandings of sexual harassment which frames the use of Q methodology in this study.

### **5.7 *Development of the Q Sample***

The sample of statements used in this study focused on various issues brought to bear on the topic of what sexual harassment ‘is’. These statements were derived through cultural analysis which involved sampling issues on the topic from a number of sources including academic literature, newspaper and magazine articles, television programmes, and semi-structured interviews. 124 statements were initially produced which were pilot tested by 10 participants for: (1) *balance* – statements produce approximately the same number of agree and disagree responses across participants, which indicates that multiple perspectives are represented, (2) *comprehensiveness* – relevant issues are covered, and (3) *clarity* – statements are clear and easily understandable. In this study, the piloting of statements involved asking participants to respond to the initial sample of 124 statements using a form which contained four categories of response which were ‘agree’, ‘disagree’, ‘neutral’ and ‘not clear’ (See appendix A1). The participants were asked to tick the most relevant category in relation to a given statement.

The collated responses, as mentioned above, are then tested for balance, comprehensiveness and clarity, which will be addressed here in turn. The process of testing for balance involved counting the number of people who have agreed,



disagreed or held a neutral position towards with each statement. A total was then calculated for each category of response. If the total numbers for the 'agree', 'disagree' and 'neutral' category is approximately the same then the sample can be described as balanced. An unbalanced sample would make it difficult for participants to complete the rank ordering of statements through from, for example, most agree to most disagree. Therefore if a sample has an overload of responses on one category, statements need to be reworded or reflected to balance statements more closely. Comprehensiveness of the sample was checked by asking participants who took part in the pilot study to describe any issues that had not been covered by existing statements or to highlight issues covered that were not relevant to the topic. Lastly, the sample was checked for clarity of expression. Items deemed 'unclear' on the pilot response form can be reworded to clearly express the statement in question.

The pilot study suggested that the initial Q set was balanced, comprehensive and that the wording of statements was clear. However, there were a number of duplicate statements in the initial Q sample. Out of duplicated statements, only one was retained and all others were discarded. The final Q sample in this study consisted of 62 statements (see appendix A2).

### **5.8 *Participants***

As mentioned earlier, participant recruitment in Q is concerned with maximising the possibility for the expression of multiple narratives on a given issue. This is not to claim that particular participants can only tell one specific story but rather that "discursive diversity" is maximised by including those variously positioned "in a multiplex of person-locations or subject-positions" (Stainton Rogers, 1995:, p. 182). Thus, participant recruitment in this study sought to reflect diversity.

The 43 participants who took part were different and similar along a number of fault-lines. For example, men and women who varied in terms of age, sexualities, social background and occupation took part. Some participants had a specialised interest in sexual violence more generally (e.g. police officers, professionals supporting victims of violence) and sexual harassment in particular (e.g. company managers). Others, however, indicated that they had no special interest or direct

experience with sexually harassing acts. The purpose of the inclusion of those with varying levels of interest in the topic was to maximise the possibility of making manifest a range of dominant, more marginalised and less familiar narratives. It should be noted that none of the participants explicitly identified themselves as victim, survivor or perpetrator of sexual harassment.

Participants were recruited through both my existing links with various organisations including the police and victim support centres as well as my social/professional networks. I knew some participants personally whereas others were unknown to me prior to this study. All participants were recruited from the Midlands area of the UK.

### **5.9 Materials & Procedure**

The 43 participants were supplied with instructions on how to complete the Q study (See appendix A3). They were asked to sort the Q set along a scale ranging from +6 (Most agree) to -6 (Least agree) using a quasi-normal distribution. Each participant was supplied with the 62 numbered statements which were typed on approximately 7cm by 2 cm cards.

To complete the sorting task, participants were given a further set of cards. Each card had a rank position typed on it as well as the specified number of items that could be allocated to the particular rank position. This was supplied so that participants could recreate the quasi normal distribution on an appropriate workspace such as a table. Participants were also given a quasi-normally distributed grid or Q grid on a piece of A4 Paper (see appendix A4). Participants were asked to map out their understanding of what sexual harassment is by using the quasi normally distributed shape to rank order the statements

After they had completed the sorting task they were asked to write down the numbers of each statement on the Q grid. For example, if participants had placed statement 50 on rank position +3 then they would write this number down on the +3 rank position on the A4 Q grid. Lastly, Participants were asked to make open-ended comments about why they had placed certain items on particular rank positions using the Q response booklet (see appendix A2). For those

participants who had the materials posted to them, they were provided with a stamped addressed envelope in order to post back the completed Q grid and response book.

### **5.10 Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis of Q sorts can be carried out using different types of factor analysis (Watts and Stenner, 2005). In this study, the 43 Q sorts were analysed using principle component analysis (PCA). The choice of analysis here is guided by Occam's razor, that is, by choosing the simplest explanation from a set of equivalent alternatives, one is likely to 'shave' off redundancies and/or ambiguities which impede understanding of a given phenomenon. To clarify this decision, it is important to note that factor analysis runs a more complicated statistical analysis of variance explained compared to PCA. However, it can be argued that in Q methodology running a more complex calculation makes no conceptual difference to the patterns that emerge (Kerlinger, 1958; Giles, 2002).

For factors to be interpretable, they require rotation. The aim of rotation is that factors comprise of Q sorts which load or correlate reasonably highly on one factor and have negligible loadings on other factors which emerge. This clear pattern of loadings would suggest that each factor is clearly distinguishable from all others identified. In this study varimax rotation was used to produce 10 orthogonal factors. Rotated factors selected for interpretation were based on the amount of variance explained by each specific factor identified. More specifically, Kaiser's criterion of selecting eigenvalues greater than 1.0 was used in this study. Whilst this criterion may appear arbitrary, factors which fall short of this minimum are unlikely to serve any data reduction aims as they will explain less variance within the data than single Q sorts (Watts and Stenner, 2005).

In addition to rotation, for a factor to be interpretable it must have an exemplar Q sort which typifies the pattern configuration for that factor. Exemplifying Q sorts are generally produced through a weighted averaging or merging of the Q sorts which loaded highly on one factor only and have a low loading on all others. Highly significant loadings are generally defined as 0.3 or above (Giles, 2002; Kline, 1994). However, I wanted to maximize the possibility of selecting

patterns which were clearly exemplary whilst simultaneously maximizing the number of high loading Q sorts with low loadings on other factors which could be merged. To achieve this, I raised the level of loadings deemed to be significant using a more stringent criterion of including those Q sorts with loadings of 0.6 on a factor and no more than 0.4 on any other factor (Please see appendix A4 for full table of Q sort loadings).

As mentioned earlier, in this study, 10 orthogonal factors were identified. However, one factor can be described as confounded due to the absence of any high loading Q sorts which are required to reconstruct an exemplifying Q sort for interpretation. Of the remaining factors, 3 contained a single Q sort with high loadings on a given factor and low loadings on all others. In Q it is typical practice to interpret factors with two or more high loading Q sorts as the emphasis is on identifying *shared* patterns. However, Watts and Stenner (2005) argue that factors with a single exemplifying Q sort can be interpreted if there is theoretical justification for doing so. I would argue that discursive diversity captured by Q necessarily draws on shared cultural knowledge and so, in a broad theoretical sense, the pattern configuration is shared. Thus, in some senses, this makes this choice no different from, say, analysing a discursive pattern which is predominant in one interview out of a data set. Given this, these factors were subject to an interpretative reading. The 6 other factors had two or more high loading Q sorts which were merged to produce a single exemplar for each factor. Each of these exemplifying Q sorts was also interpreted.

### ***5.11 Q Study 2: Policies and Practices: Stories of Victimisation***

The second Q study conducted was concerned with the question of how sexual harassment can be resisted or otherwise dealt with. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, the act of framing behaviour as a form of sexual harassment and/or using formalised routes of amelioration to deal with it often runs the risk of secondary victimisation for recipients. In this study, I explore multiple understandings of how the issue of sexual harassment should be dealt with, focusing on how particular policy narratives open up or close down possibilities for secondary victimisation.

### **5.12 Development of the Q set**

In this study, the sample was derived from a wide range of sources relevant to the question of how sexual harassment should be dealt with. These sources included cultural analysis of workplace policies on sexual harassment, newspaper and magazine articles, academic literature, television programmes and interviews. 73 items were initially produced which were pilot tested by sixteen people for comprehensiveness, balance and clarity of statements (see appendix B1). The outcome of the pilot study suggested that the Q set was unbalanced. Therefore some items were reflected in order to make the statements balance more closely. The final Q set consisted of 60 statements (see appendix B2).

### **5.13 Participants**

As with the previous Q study described above, participant recruitment was underpinned by the need to maximise diversity. The 44 participants who took part included men and women who varied in terms of age, sexualities, social background and occupation and who had varying levels of special interest in the topic. Some of the participants who took part in the first Q study mentioned above also participated in this study. However, some participants took part in this study only. To recruit participants, I used the same links with organisations and social/professional networks described in the Q study above. All participants were based in the Midlands area of the UK.

Important to note is that none of the participants who took part in this study explicitly identified themselves as victim, survivor or perpetrator of sexual harassment.

### **5.14 Materials & Procedure**

The 44 participants who took part in this study were supplied with a similar set of materials that were used in the first study and followed the same procedure. However some of the specific features of the materials differ from study one. More specifically, participants were asked to sort the Q set along a scale ranging from +5 (Most agree) to -5 (Most disagree) using a quasi-normal distribution (see appendix B3). Participants were also given the opportunity to comment further on

specific statement positionings using a response booklet provided (see appendix B2).

### **5.15 Statistical analysis**

Principle component analysis and varimax rotation of the 44 completed Q sorts produced 9 orthogonal factors. Factors selected for interpretation were those with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. As mentioned earlier, for a factor to be interpretable, Q sorts with high significant loadings on one factor only are required to produce a pattern configuration which typifies the given factor. As with the first Q study mentioned above, to maximise the number of high loading Q sorts whilst selecting those which clearly exemplify a given factor, I selected Q sorts with loadings of 0.6 or above on a factor and no more than 0.4 on any other factor. 4 factors had two or more high Q sort loadings on each factor only which were subsequently merged to produce an exemplifying Q sort for each factor for interpretative reading. The remaining factors had a single high loading Q sort with low loadings on all other factors. For these factors, the single Q sort was interpreted (please see appendix B4 for the full table of Q sort loadings).

It should be noted that factor 7 was bipolar. A bipolar factor is one which has both positive and negative Q sort loadings on it. This means that Q sorts with a negative loading have been completed in an opposite way to those Q sorts with positive loadings. Therefore two interpretations will be given of this factor. Firstly, the interpretation will proceed in the same way as with all other factors. This factor will be labelled factor 7a. The second interpretation (factor 7b) will involve reversing the position of statements. For example, items placed at +6 will now be placed at -6 and so on.

### **5.16 Questions of Power**

Central to the exploration of sexual harassment in this thesis are the ways in which sexually harassing acts are located in and (re)produce forms of heterosexualised/gendered power relations (see previous chapters). Whilst I would argue that Q methodology was particularly suited to address the research questions outlined in the above sections, it is important to note that it is not a tool designed for the analysis of power relations *per se*. A statistically dominant

factor produced through Q does not necessarily translate as a social institutionally powerful narrative. For example, it is possible that a factor which explains less variance is more reflective of predominant forms of power and power relationships in operation in particular contexts (Brown, 1980).

To explore the operation of power in the ways in which sexual harassment is variously constituted, I drew insights from Foucauldian informed discourse analysis to analyse a set of interview data. Before moving on to describe the interview study, I will firstly discuss notions of power and discourse as theorised within discursive approaches more generally and Foucauldian discourse analysis in particular.

### ***5.17 Discourse Analysis: Power and Agency***

As is extensively discussed elsewhere, the key point of departure of approaches which take discourse as its focus of study from mainstream psychology is the conceptualisation of language/discourse as actively producing and constituting social phenomena. This view of language stands in stark contrast to more mainstream notions of it as a transparent medium, passively describing the objects it represents.

For Foucault (1969), discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which we speak” (p. 49). Discourses are thus conceptualised as a social practice which produce and reproduce the objects to which they refer in multiple, often contradictory ways. Important to note is that discourses are neither fixed nor universal. Rather they become manifest, take shape and are framed by the different historical and cultural contexts in which they emerge. Given this, discourses are not the product of ‘individual’ activity as such but rather constitute and (re)produce an “array of subject positions” (Parker, 1994, p. 245), which when taken up, shape and constrain, enable and disable, ways of being in the social world (e.g. Parker, 1992).

Subject positionings as well as the discourses they are situated in, differ in terms of access to power that they can offer. Central to analysis of power from Foucauldian perspectives are the ways in which norms work to regulate “the

web of everyday existence” (Foucault, 1979: 183) – referred to by Foucault (1979) as a form of disciplinary power. The workings of disciplinary power highlight the ways in which power is not only negative, that is, hierarchical and repressive but also positive in the sense that it produces and constitutes objects and subject positionings. The analysis of the operation of power from this perspective centres on the ways material power can be exercised in and through discourses as well as the ways in which relations of power are produced and constituted in and by discursive constructions.

The ways in which discourses are said to have a productive effect has raised concern about how individuals can be conceptualised as active agents, capable of resisting and challenging the power relations in which they are located. Hollway and Jefferson (2005) argue that the problem of agency – the degree to which individuals are conceptualised as active/passive – is one that is grounded in western philosophical debates drawing on the individual – social dualism. Discursive approaches more generally have stood accused of overly deterministic analysis, locating the individual as passive in the web of social discursive action (e.g. McNay, 2000). To address this, some approaches have attempted to deal with this issue by focussing on the “empirical and [to] turn attention to describing the way in which agency and structure become practical issues for people engaged in their local moral orders. We analyse agency as discursive resource rather than a state or essence” (Wetherell, 2005, p. 170). This discursive approach to agency asks questions such as “when do people invoke personal agency and control, when do they invoke external determinants?” (Wetherell, 2005, p. 170). I would argue that whilst this is, depending on the task at hand, an interesting analytical avenue to pursue, it nevertheless sidesteps theoretical considerations of the operation of agency in relation to discourse.

In common with other strands of discourse analytics, Foucauldian approaches informed by notions of disciplinary power have been criticised on the basis of discourse determinism and of failing to provide an adequate theorisation of agency as a precondition for resistance to power (e.g. McNay, 1991; 2000; Deveaux, 1994). In response to such criticisms, I would agree with Gavey (2005)



who argues that Foucauldian models of power have been read as “unnecessarily overdetermining” by some scholars in the field (p. 89). Notions of resistance are inextricably interwoven in relations of power in Foucault’s theorisations as reflected in his claim that “where there is power, there is resistance” (1980, p. 95). The issue, it seems, is how agency can be reconceptualised when there is no asocial subject, when one can never be situated outside of power, as from a Foucauldian perspective, there is no vantage point outside of discourse to perform agentic action or to resist the various circulation of power within and through discursive webs. However, as Fraser (1997) points out, the productive effect of discourse does not preclude the conceptualisation of subjects as “*both* culturally constituted *and* capable of critique” (p. 214). In a similar vein, Butler (1990) contends that “construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency” (p. 147). Instead of locating agency squarely in the subject, Butler argues that agency and possibilities for resistance are dispersed within spheres of cultural intelligibility produced by the limitations of prevailing norms to contain the multiplicity of expressions possible. Rather than bypassing the question of agency, Butler’s (1990) theorisation reconceptualises it as “enactments of variation within regulated, normative and habitual processes of signification” (Moss, 1998, p. 99).

The ways in which Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis lends itself to exploring the productive effect of discourses in the context of power relations and resistance was deemed particularly suited to examine heterosexualised/gendered power relationships in the constitution of sexual harassment in this thesis. This is not to claim that other forms of discourse analysis cannot or do not explicate power relations (see, for example, Anderson and Doherty, 2008). Rather, theoretical insights of Foucault’s work shift analytic focus to the connections between constructions identified [and subject positions therein] and social and cultural practices using notions of disciplinary power which I have found useful in articulating particular power dynamics in heterosexualised constructions of harassment (see, for example, Chapters 7 and 9). In this thesis, Foucauldian discourse analysis was used to explicate the productive effect of discourses circulating in a set of interview data. It is this interview study which is the focus

of discussion in the following sections.

### **5.18 *The Interview Study***

Data for this study was collected through one to one semi-structured interviews. The development of the interview schedule was informed by a range of literature on the issue (see chapters 2 and 3). Informal discussions with a range of people who varied along a number of fault-lines including age, occupation, sexualities, gender were also used to highlight issues and ideas that may become relevant to the interview process. An initial set of possible questions were piloted in these informal discussions with individuals to get a sense of whether the wording of questions was easily understandable and whether they tapped in to relevant issues. The outcome of piloting suggested that the questions met the aforementioned aims and provided me with interesting and relevant ideas for additional prompts in the interview process (See appendix C1).

To elicit and engage with broad perspectives on the issue of sexual harassment, the term ‘unwanted sexual attention’ was employed as an alternative to ‘sexual harassment’. This is because some previous research suggests that the former term tends to produce responses which focus on a broader spectrum of manifestations of sexual harassment whereas the latter phrase tends to elicit extreme versions of such behaviour (e.g. Thomas and Kitinger, 1997; Herbert, 1997).

The final version of the schedule consisted of four questions and a series of prompts which aimed to tap into issues concerned with (1) definition, (2) causes, and (3) policy interventions. None of the questions explicitly focused on or required a disclosure of personal experiences of sexual harassment as the broad purpose of the interview was to explore the multiplex of versions that can be taken up in relation to the issue of sexual harassment.

### **5.19 *Participants & Data Collection***

Participant recruitment followed the same strategy used in the Q studies mentioned above. More specifically, I aimed to recruit a diverse sample of participants to facilitate the possibility of eliciting manifold versions of unwanted sexual attention. Participants recruited varied in terms of gender, sexualities,

age and occupation. Some participants had also taken part in one or both Q studies, others took part in the interview only. Some participants were unknown to me prior to interview and were recruited through my links with particular organisations such as victim/survivor support centres and the police. Other participants I knew personally or were recruited through individuals in our common social/professional network. All participants who took part were based in the Midlands area of the UK.

Participant recruitment began with a meeting where I outlined the focus of the study and explained what participation would involve. All participants were informed that the interview would be audio-taped and transcribed and that I would remove any identifying information such as names, place of work and so on. Participants were also given a copy of the interview schedule and were invited to discuss the process of participation along with the interview questions. In this initial discussion, I explained their ethical rights and reassured them that the interview did not require any personal disclosures of sensitive experiences that they did not want to make. After this initial meeting, participants were asked if they would like to take part and a date, time and place were set to conduct the interview. Participants were given my work email and work phone number to cancel if they decided in between this initial meeting and interview date that they did not want to take part. They were given written information about the study to take away with them and a consent form to be signed and returned to me when we met to conduct the interview proper (see appendix C2).

The interviews were conducted in locations convenient for the participant and so were conducted in a range of venues including, for example, police stations and other workplaces, participant's homes, and cafes. All interviews were tape-recorded using a Dictaphone and microcassettes.

Initially 27 participants were interviewed. However, 9 of the tapes had to be omitted from the final data set in this study. This is because 7 of the tapes were warped beyond repair, I could not be transcribed due to bad sound quality and a further tape was withdrawn from the process and destroyed at the participant's request. The request for withdrawal of data was because the participant

concerned had, as the discussion unfolded, disclosed sensitive information about a third party and on reflection was uncomfortable about this being used in the project. The final data set comprised of interviews with 13 women and 5 men which had lasted approximately between 30 to 60 minutes.

### **5.20 *The Interview Process***

Before moving on to discuss the transcription of the interview data collected, it seems pertinent to discuss the process of doing the interviews. In chapter 4, I discussed how issues of Otherness impacted the process of participant recruitment and the broader project. In this section, I would like to shift focus to the ways in which other particular positionings in which I was located in relation to my participants, as well as the wider institutional context where this project is situated, impacted and shaped the interviewing process. More specifically, my positionings as student and as inexperienced researcher became tied up with issues of doing ‘good’ interviews within the discipline of psychology.

Whilst a number of textbooks describe guidelines and/or helpful tips about the process of doing interviews, there is much less said about exchanges in interviews that “would be sanitized away, deemed bad research, embarrassing intrusions of the personal or even lapses of interviewer control (Burman, 1994: 57). In the process of doing the interviews, there were moments where I struggled to articulate the question I wanted to ask, of uncertainty of which issue to focus on when the participant had raised a number of interesting points when answering one question, of laughter and of personal engagements on issues other than the focus of research.

It is this messiness that is often not captured in advice on doing interviews and, as an inexperienced researcher, left me feeling embarrassed about my inability to conduct a ‘clean’ ‘professional’ interview. I was concerned that the interviews I conducted fell short of the description of the interviewer as ultimately in control, who skilfully guides the discussion through careful questioning and prompting. However, instances of discussion which move away from traditional positionings of the interviewer as in control, which are focused on issues other than the subject at hand, can make explicit the multiple positionings available to the researcher

and participant in the interview context and make explicit norms/assumptions guiding the research (Burman, 1994).

The ways in which such exchanges can make explicit multiple positionings can be seen nearing the end of an interview I conducted with Diane. Diane was an ex colleague of mine who was both older than me and occupied a higher status job position in the organisation that we worked in. In this excerpt, I was finding it difficult to compose the next question that I wanted to ask her:

*D: Then yeah, you would have I think, people report more stranger assaults don't they, than people you know.*

*L: Yeah um xxx bear with me.*

*D: You're very good, you haven't got anything written down.*

*L: [laugh]*

*D: [laugh] Anything written down.*

*L: How do you think friends would respond to the person that's on the receiving end of unwanted sexual attention*

Here, I explicitly draw attention to the difficulty I have in composing the next question which is constructed implicitly as a disruption to smooth interviewing processes. This can be seen in Diane's reassuring response to it by positioning me as "very good" interviewer which is then emphasised by appealing to my skills of being able to do it doing without having "anything written down". This exchange can be read as inverting power relationships between researcher and researched in the sense that the participant responded to me and my implicit concerns around questioning. This can be seen further in an interview with Eve. Like Diane, Eve was older than me and we were introduced through mutual links with the police:

*E: I think we're just particularly lucky, we are um, people that deal with that kind of thing that they get it down on paper to record it, important isn't it?*

*L: Yeah.*

*E: Interesting subject to do a thesis on, whatever it is.*

*L: Yeah, yeah, I yeah*

*C: Huge subject, plenty to write about.*

*E: Oh God yeah, cos I had very fixed ideas about it when I first started it and they've all changed and they've all, you know, it's amazing.*

*E: Is that just from talking to different people, getting other people's perspectives on stuff, has that made it change?*

*L: Yeah, yeah and er, the literature on it as well.*

*E: Interesting stuff, anything else?*

*L: Yes [laugh]*

*E: [laugh]*

Here my student status is invoked through reference to my “thesis”. Eve, through her comments that it is an “interesting”, and later on, a “huge “subject” to research invites me to talk about my project. My response is marked by my positioning as student where I give a personal account of the process of learning about the issue, where I progressed from having “very fixed ideas” to having those ideas “all change”. Thus my novice status is made explicit. Through this exchange, Eve can be read as inverting the researcher – researched power relationship – it is she that asks the questions at this point in the interview and then controls when discussion of the topic area will recommence as she says “interesting stuff, anything else?”.

Of course these instances of inversion of traditional power relationships between the researcher and researched should not distract attention away from my ultimate power in terms of translating, constructing and deconstructing versions of my interactions with participants in a project which is intended for more public consumption (e.g. Coyle, 1996). My point here is not to claim that I was powerless in the process. I was aware that it was possible that my status as inexperienced and as student may well have positioned participants as needing to ‘help’ me. I was also concerned that my particular positionings may have impacted the content and extent of disclosure of particular information during the interview. For this reason, I gave participants the opportunity of listening to their recording to make sure they were happy with it remaining as part of the data set. This option should not be seen as ‘solving’ this possible problem. However, I felt

that the opportunity for participants to listen to their tapes without me present might provide them with a sense of how the discussion unfolded when viewed from an alternative standpoint. As mentioned above, one participant who withdrew their data had taken up this option.

### **5.21 *Transcription***

The transcription of audio-recordings was guided by two overlapping concerns: (1) the need to represent aspects of interaction that would facilitate analysis, and (2) providing the audience with a readable version of the interview recording which contextualised the exchange between myself and the participant. The notation used focused on pauses, emphasis, laughter and other paralinguistic features which I felt was important to the interaction and would help to contextualise the process of analysis (see appendix C3). I also felt that this level of transcription would provide readers with some context for making sense of particular points of discussion. Early on in the process of beginning the analysis, I did return to my initial decisions for the system of transcription of employed to ask questions about whether other forms of notation should be included. This decision making process was informed by listening to audio recordings again in conjunction with reading the transcripts and initial analytic notes. However, I felt that further transcription detail did not add anything significant to the particular kind of analytic process I had chosen to undertake.

To enhance readability of the transcripts I also used conventional forms of punctuation. Therefore these transcripts contain forms of “naturalised transcription, in which the text conforms to written discourse conventions, and denaturalised transcription in which the text retains links to oral discourse forms” (Bucholtz, 2000: 1439).

The above description of choices available in the process of transcription lays open the ways in which transcripts are never a complete or true account of the interview encounter (Bucholtz, 2000; Ochs, 1979; Swann and Graddol, 1994; O’Connell and Kowal, 1995; Kvale, 1996). Any recording medium of a research encounter necessarily removes the encounter from its context and as such becomes a textual form in its own right rather than a passive medium

reflecting the ‘reality’ of an instance of interaction. The activity of transcription becomes a process of translation from oral discourse to written form which inevitably means that transcriptions can never be identical to the interview encounter. Moreover, the transcriber brings to this process particular assumptions, interests and values which variously impact what is included and excluded in the final transcript (Bucholtz, 2000). It is in this sense that the transcript is already an interpretation of the encounter it seeks to record (Swann and Graddol, 1994).

From the theoretical standpoint I have taken in this thesis, this conceptualization of the transcription process is not a problem that needs to be solved; rather it reflects the very active part that researchers play in the co-production of research with their participants. I would agree with Bucholtz (2000), that this process of transcription as a partial, interpretative activity requires not ‘solutions’ as such but a politicized reflectivity to explore why we have included the things that we have and the impact of rendering invisible the things we exclude. More specifically, Bucholtz (2000) contends that “to ask that researchers think about ourselves in relation to our transcripts is a step toward making transcription practices visible, toward emphasizing that transcription is always partial, in every sense of that word, and toward exploring how our practices shape our knowledge” (P. 1463).

## **5.22 Ethics**

In chapter 4, I discussed broad ethical issues that variously impact the research process. This section turns attention to the ways in which I responded to issues and considerations as outlined in the British Psychological Society’s guidelines for conducting ethical research. All three studies outlined above followed similar procedures for ethical practice and as such the following descriptions refer to the treatment of all individuals who took part in this research.

## **5.23 Informed Consent**

I used a number of strategies to ensure that my explanation of what participation in this research would involve was sufficient for participants to get a sense of the processes that they would experience and how their contribution would be used in this project. When I talked to individuals initially about their possible participation, I outlined what the project was about and what I broadly trying



to achieve. This included a discussion about my own investments and interests in doing the project. In relation to the Q studies, as well as give participants a written consent form (see appendices A5 and B5) I gave a verbal description of the process of completing a Q sort and explained how their contribution would be analysed. During explanation of the interview study, I also gave participants a written consent form (see appendix C2) as well as a copy of the broad questions that would be guiding the interview but explained that other questions would be asked to follow up particular points that they made in the discussion. At the end of this initial meeting participants were provisionally asked if they would like to take part and either a mutually convenient time/day/location was agreed on for participation or in the case of most of the Q studies I said that I would send a Q pack in the post.

In addition to this verbal discussion, I also gave participants this information in written form so that they could consider their decision to participate in the absence of any pressure they may have felt to agree to take part. For those individuals I met with for their participation in the process, I asked them if they were still happy to continue and at that point asked them to sign a consent form. Those who took part in the postal study returned consent forms with their contribution via mail.

#### **5.24 *Right to Withdraw***

In this initial meeting with participants, I discussed their right to withdraw from the research process with them and explained that provisional agreement did not tie them to participation. For those taking part in the interview study, I emphasised that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not wish to and that the interview did not require disclosure of any information that the participants did not want to discuss.

I provided both my work phone number and email for participants to withdraw from the process at this stage and cancel any appointments made. I set a deadline of one week for withdrawal after participation. For those taking part in the interview study, I made each individual aware that they had the option of listening

to their particular interview before the withdrawal deadline to make sure they were happy with the information that was disclosed during this encounter.

### **5.25 *Debriefing***

For the Q postal studies, once I received the completed Q sort, participants were contacted by phone as agreed in the initial meeting described above to arrange a time/day to discuss participatory issues. For other participants, debriefing occurred at the end of their contribution. I invited participants to discuss any issues that had arisen, how they felt about participation more generally and if they had any further questions that they had not as yet asked.

Although none of the participants had identified as, or been selected on the basis of experiencing sexual violence, I was also aware that through the process of participation personal issues may become salient for participants (e.g. Harned, 2005). In the event that participants made a personal disclosure, I planned to initially draw on my professional experience and training of working with victims/perpetrators and put them in touch with organisations that could offer appropriate support. No participants made any such disclosures.

### **5.26 *Anonymity***

I explained to all participants that I would anonymise their contribution to the research project. This involved numbering Q sorts and referring to individual Q sort comments made in the response booklet by number only in the final project. Audio tapes of interviews were stored in a lockable metal box which only I had access to. Identifying information such as participant names, names of others mentioned, places of work and so on were removed from the transcripts. Transcripts were only shared with others, such as members of the supervisory team, once the transcripts had been suitably anonymised.

### **5.27 *Ethical implications of the broader project***

As discussed in chapter 4, the production of knowledge can variously impact, enable or disable, wider power relationships which shape ways of being with particular others. Such ways of being may disadvantage particular groups in complex ways. Through this project, I have attempted to reflexively consider

the impact this work may have in terms of maintaining and (re) producing problematic power relationships. This has not, and I would argue, should not be an individual exercise as the particular standpoint in which the researcher is located may constrain the ways in which implications of the project are conceptualised and understood. Throughout this process, I have used a number of discussion forums such as supervisory meetings, conferences and informal discussion with many varied others to think through the implications of particular strands of thought and of ways of representing others that this work might have.

### **5.28 *Summary***

In this chapter, the methods used to collect and analyse the entire data set for this thesis were described. This description was embedded within broader theoretical, methodological and ethical concerns which contextualise the processes of knowledge production in this thesis. In the four chapters that follow, analyses of the aforementioned data will be outlined. This begins with a reading of Q data collected in the first study which focused on understandings or definitions of sexual harassment.

## **Chapter 6: Call It What You Want? – Understandings of Sexual Harassment**

### **6.1 *Introduction***

This chapter centres on the interpretation of data collected in first Q methodological study conducted. In this study, multiple narratives which focused on the issue of what constitutes sexual harassment were identified. In this chapter, I provide a reading of these narratives with a view to unpack the implications of how sexual harassment is conceptualised in these particular stories. This chapter will begin by describing the rationale for the study in the context of previous literature. The discussion will then move on to the interpretation of each narrative identified through Q analysis described in chapter 5. Lastly, I will focus on the variable ways in which issues of sexism, power and ‘normal’ sex become relevant to the narratives identified with a view to unpacking the implications they have in relation to broader debates around the problematisation of unwanted sexualised/gendered conduct.

### **6.2 *Drawing Boundaries***

As discussed in chapter 2, the general ‘reluctance’ or ‘unwillingness’ of victims (particularly women) to describe experiences of unwanted sexualised/gendered conduct as ‘sexual harassment’ has been a central concern within this body of literature. Concerns around non-labelling lie in the ways in which the use of the term ‘sexual harassment’ has been treated as playing a crucial part in the “redefinition” of women’s experiences of problematic behaviour from ‘normal’ ‘everyday’ relations to a form of sexualised/gendered violence (MacKinnon, 1979; Kitzinger and Thomas, 1995; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997; Madison & Minichiello, 2000). More specifically, for some, the term is intended to encompass sexism in all its varied manifestations which allows for more ‘mundane’ everyday experiences as well as the more extreme versions of unwanted conduct to be problematised as a manifestation of gendered/sexualised power (e.g. Wise and Stanley, 1987; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997; Magley and Shupe, 2005). Predominant representations of the problem of non-labelling focus on women’s reluctance to extend use of the term to more insidious, day-to-day experiences of sexist/gendered/sexualised behaviour.

This concern has given rise to a plethora of research focussed on accounts of non-labelling in which women's non-use of the label 'sexual harassment' has been variously represented as, for example, evidence of internalised gender oppression (e.g. Monson, 1997; Cairns, 1997), as a strategy to minimise the seriousness of experiences (e.g. Madison and Minichiello, 2000) and as a failure to recognise or understand what sexual harassment is (e.g. Herbert, 1997; Hinze, 2004: see also chapter 2). As argued in chapter 2, these constructions of women victim's non-labelling are often represented as a significant barrier to challenging sexual harassment which works to shift responsibility for this phenomenon from the initiator of problematic conduct to the recipient.

What has received less attention in the literature is the ways in which the issue of what counts as sexual harassment is constituted, how the term is used and how such use is contextualised. I would argue that this stems from implicit assumptions in dominant representations of labelling behaviour in the literature that definitions (should) translate clearly into experience and that the contextualisation of an experience as sexual harassment is inherently 'good' and so the question of what constitutes sexual harassment in the current cultural context has not taken centre stage as an issue for research. As others have noted, these assumptions have worked to minimise or discount the problematisation of conduct through the use of other means such as using notions of sexism to make sense of an incident. In addition to this, I would argue that the focus on the non-use of the term 'sexual harassment' also raises the following questions: how do particular experiences, acts and events become constituted as sexual harassment? What counts as sexual harassment in the current cultural context and why?

To explore issues raised by the above questions, I sought to map narratives of sexual harassment which have currency in the current cultural context through the use of Q methodology. The pattern analytic of Q methodology lends itself to reading the ways in which particular issues are included, excluded or otherwise contextualised in narratives of sexual harassment. To avoid (re) producing the ways in which women are explicitly and implicitly positioned as accountable for identifying manifestations of sexual harassment, I shifted focus from women

victims to the diversity of narratives available by including both men and women who varied along a number of fault lines in this study (see also chapter 5).

### **6.3 Analysis of Narratives**

In this study, 9 factors were identified. In the following section a brief description of the participants who loaded on a given factor is provided prior to the reading of the factor as a narrative. The reading of narratives is informed by participant comments which contextualised the positioning of particular statements in completed Q sorts which were merged to produce the exemplifying Q sort for each factor.

### **6.4 Factor 1: The Sex(-ism) Narrative**

This factor explains 14.368% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 6.178. Four participants loaded significantly on this factor (Q sorts, 9, 19, 29 and 32). Participants 9, 19 and 29 are women and participant 32 is a man. At the time of this study, participant 9 was a 50 year old lecturer; participant 19 was in her early 30's and worked as a manager for a violence crisis centre; Participant 29 was 29 years old and working as a stock controller and Participant 32 was in his 50s and was project worker in a hostel.

#### *Interpretation*

In this narrative, sexual harassment is represented as explicitly sexualised acts which primarily involve unwanted physical touching of any part of a person's body (32: +4). More specifically the touching of sexualised body areas such as genitals (27: +6), breasts (61: +5) and bottom (46: +5) are manifestations which typify harassing behaviour. Other physical acts such as the touching of a person's hand (49: +1), putting arms around another person (34: 0) or stroking someone's back (31: 0) appear to be more ambiguous in terms of their sexual content. Therefore, these acts require further contextualisation as the meaning of such behaviour "depends on the relationships of [the] people involved and circumstances of the incident but obviously could be harassment" (P29 comments for 61: +5, 27: +6, 49: +1, 34: 0, 31: 0).

Physical contact is not the sole defining feature of sexual harassment in this narrative. The emphasis here is on unwanted *sexual* acts and as such mere exposure to sexual imagery/content is treated as potentially harassing. This could include, flashing (30: +3), being exposed to pornography (22: +3) or hearing sexual comments and/or jokes. Importantly, subjective feelings of upset, of disliking the behaviour encountered, are prioritised over the intention to cause offence when determining whether events such as these count as harassment (13: +3; 1: -6). As Participant 29 comments: “some people think what they are saying is harmless but it is actually offensive. Still harassment [but] without the intent”.

Given that the emphasis here is on sexualised encounters, it is unsurprising that explicit sexual advances in the form of pestering someone for sex constitute sexual harassment (9: +5). However, the idea that it is only natural for men to make a pass at women is disagreed with (57: -6). Instead of being part of normal/natural heterosex, sexual harassment is seen as an abuse of power (17: +4). More specifically, it is not the case that sexual harassment is grounded in sexual attraction only, stemming from the perpetrator’s sexual preferences (40: +2). It is possible that heterosexual individuals may sexually harass same-sex others because this behaviour “is a form of manipulation and power” (P32 comments for 28: -3). An example of such power abuses could be instances of workplace harassment in which a boss abuses their senior position by asking an employee to sleep with him/her in exchange for a promotion. However, this is not to say that it is *only* power differentials in the work hierarchy which give rise to sexual harassment as it can happen anywhere (29: +4).

Sexual harassment as an abuse of *sexualised* power can be distinguished from other manifestations of power such as sexism (14: +6). For example, undermining comments or exclusionary practices on the basis of gender constitutes “discrimination rather than harassment” (P29 comments for 39: -5 & 26: -4; 20: -5; 44: -4; 3, -5). Similarly, undermining and/or exclusionary practices on the basis of sexual preference is not sexual harassment but rather “discrimination” (P29 comments for 62:-4) or possibility “sexism?” (P9 comments for 45: -3; 39: -5; 5: -4).

## Factor 1: The Sex(-ism) Narrative

						(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment						
					(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(18) Bleeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment					
				(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment				
		(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment		(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticises an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment			
		(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(55) Comments or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(4) Adults can sexually harass children	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power		
	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(10) Children can sexually harass adults	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	
(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	(9) Pestered someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment
(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Least Agree												Most Agree



### 6.5 Factor 2: The Vulnerable Victim Narrative

Factor 2 explains 12.713% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 5.467. Three participants loaded significantly on this factor. Two of these participants are women and one is male.

#### *Interpretation*

In a similar vein to Factor 1, the vulnerable victim narrative represents behaviour focused on the physical body as characteristic of sexual harassment. However, it is not sexual component of these behaviour which defines them as harassment per se but rather that the touching a person's genitals is "the only bits of the body really classed as *private* so unless you have permission it is the worst thing you can do" (P27 comment for 27: +6). Similarly, flashing or "showing your *privates* is just as bad if someone didn't want to see it. It would mean that the person doing the flashing was giving sexual advances" (P27 comment for 30: +6). Like Participant 27, Participant 34 suggests that touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment because this is a "*personal* area of the body" (P34, 61: +5). Sexual harassment then is behaviour which represents a significant transgression of boundaries around the private/personal arena (6: +3). The emphasis here is on more extreme, violations of the private sphere. It is not the case that everyday instances of invading another's personal space necessarily constitute harassment as this "can be accidental/ unavoidable" (P34 comments for 15: -2). That does not mean to say that a person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive (1: -3; 13: +3). The emphasis is seems is on whether transgressions of the personal arena can be read as an abuse of power (59: -4; 26: 4).

Here, sexual harassment works through the targeting of those individuals who have less access to particular forms of social power relative to the initiator (26:+4). For example, these power differentials allow adults to sexually harass children "all the time [because] children trust adults, making them so very vulnerable" (P40 comments for 4: +5; 29: +5). In adult relationships, this power relation may manifest in the workplace in the form of quid pro quo harassment "especially if the person being propositioned is the bread winner in the family (P 40 comments for 24: +4; 9: +4). As well as focusing on economic and age related power relations, this narrative also highlights the ways in which gendered practices can give rise to abuses of power in which individuals may be undermined or excluded from activities on the basis of gender (26: +4; 39: +3; 29: +5). In this narrative, age, gender and occupying subordinate positions in the work hierarchy can work to make people vulnerable to sexual

harassment. Given that sexual harassment may manifest as sexualised and/or gendered power practices, sexual attraction is not necessarily a prerequisite for the occurrence of this phenomenon (57: -3; 40: -4; 28: -4). Nor does sexual harassment have to be repetitive in order to constitute an abuse of power (2: -6).

Central to this narrative is the notion that sexual harassment is behaviour which in some way exploits individuals who are positioned as vulnerable by their relative lack of power in relation to the initiator. As such, acts which appear non-coercive cannot be said to constitute harassment. For example, behaviours such as complimenting a person's looks are "not inappropriate [and] are generally nice (P34 comments for 19: -5). Similarly, being called love, dear or darling might be a conversational "habit" (P34 comments for 36: -6; 8: -5; 48: -5) and are generally seen as "a term of endearment, used widely, deeming it to be a non-sexist/sexual remark" (P27 comments for 36: -6). These acts appear to lack the outward appearance of being exploitative and/or discriminatory and as such fall outside the boundaries of sexual harassment in this narrative.

## Factor 2: The Vulnerable Victim Narrative

						(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment						
					(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment					
				(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual Harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(10) Children can sexually harass adults	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment				
		(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment				
	(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticises an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment			
	(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(9) Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	
(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment
(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(4) Adults can sexually harass children	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Least Agree

Most Agree

### **6.6 Factor 3: The Equal Opportunities Narrative**

This factor explains 9.083% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 3.906. One man (Participant 24) and one woman (Participant 17) loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 24 was 26 year old engineer and participant 17 was a 40 year old centre administrator.

#### *Interpretation*

As with the two factors outlined above, the equal opportunities narrative characterises sexual harassment as an abuse of power (17: +6). This power relation rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction (40: +6) and is not conceptualised as a natural/normal component of heterosexual (57: -6). Instead sexual harassment as a power relation is “used to get what he/she wants” (Participant 24 comment on 17: +6). Power can be derived through unequal economic positionings in the workplace. For example, unequal economic power in the workplace can be used to coerce employees into unwanted sex (24: +5; 9: +5). Similarly, the use of higher ranking job positions can also be used to exact punishment in the form of work performance criticism when an employee has refused sex with a boss (12: +5). However, it is not solely hierarchically organised work structures which afford certain individuals more power over others. Power is also derived in the ways in which gendered/sexualised practices work to position women as subordinate to men (44: +4; 26: +4 39: +3; 52: +3; 33: -4), and heterosexuals as superior to ‘other’ sexualities (62: +3; 28: -6).

Gendered harassment practices which undermine or exclude women from activities on the basis of sex could take the form of (re)producing constraints around femininity such as suggesting that child-care is a woman’s job or suggesting that women conform to particular practices such as wearing feminine clothes (44: +4; 52: +3). Similarly, discriminating practices around sexualities may take the form of exclusionary practices on the basis of a person’s sexual preference. It is not the case that complaints of such abuses of power reflect an era of political correctness [where] it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment (60: -3). Instead political correctness is what “people...use...as an excuse to say what they want and think they can get away with it. It is a typical comment to blame their shortcomings on someone else” (Participant 17 comment on 60: -3).

In the spirit of equal opportunities, a fair system is needed to decide whether sexual harassment has occurred. It is not the case that an initiator is only guilty if they intended to be offensive (1: -5). Nor should it be down to the person on the receiving end to decide whether sexual harassment has occurred (25: -3). Given that the focus of this narrative is on equal opportunities, evidence of discriminatory practice is needed for an incident to constitute sexual harassment. More individual comments about a person's character such as suggesting that a person is immature (55: -5) or personalised interaction such as being called 'love', beeping a car horn at someone or putting arms around another individual are not necessarily or obviously discriminatory and as such do not constitute as harassment in this narrative (36: -4; 34: -4; 18: -4)

### Factor 3: The Equal Opportunities Narrative

						(4) Adults can sexually harass children						
					(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(10) Children can sexually harass adults					
				(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment				
		(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment				
	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment			
(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(9) Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment		
(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticises an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power
(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Least Agree

Most Agree

### **6.7 Factor 4: The Boundaries Narrative**

This factor explains 7.952% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 3.419. Two women (participants 13 & 31) loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 13 was a 26 year old women working in an office. Participant 31 opted out of providing demographic information.

#### *Interpretation*

This narrative focuses on making explicit subtle distinctions between harassing and non-harassing behaviour or events which constitute a different issue to sexual harassment. For example, like factor 1, the boundaries narrative represents sexism as distinct from sexual harassment because “sexism is due to sex/gender. Sexual harassment is due to desires/control/manipulation (P31 comments on 14: -4). The constitution of sexism as different to sexual harassment does not mean to say that sexual harassment does not manifest differently for men and women. For example, suggesting that a person sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment for women, but it is less likely to be experienced as harassment by men (11: +2; 47: -4; 25: +4).

The emphasis on the sexual aspect of sexual harassment is reflected in the ways in which coercive unwanted sexual acts such as quid pro quo harassment on the job and punishment for rejecting sexual advances through work performance criticism is seen as characterising sexual harassment (24: +6; 12: +5). However, this should not be taken to imply that sexual harassment only occurs in the workplace. Rather it is noted that it can happen anywhere (29: +6).

Through a series of distinctions made the explicit sexualised overtones of sexually harassing behaviour compared to other non-harassing is emphasised. For example, whilst leering can be a form of sexual harassment, staring on the other hand is unlikely to be (37: +4; 42: -6). Similarly, whilst repeatedly asking someone out on a date can be read as implicitly sexualised, the lack of overt sexual advance renders it as less harassing. In contrast to this, the explicitly sexualised act of pestering someone for sex falls within the boundaries of what constitutes sexual harassment in this narrative. The explicitly sexualised component can also be seen in the prioritisation of direct exposure to the obscene in the form of phones, emails and images as sexually harassing behaviour (6:+5; 22: +3; 38: +3) Importantly, sexual acts and/or comments must offend the recipient for it to be classed as harassment (13: +5; 25: +4;

21: +3). It is noted that some behaviours such as hearing sexual jokes may not be interpreted as problematic (51: -3).

Distinctions are also drawn around the body and personal space in terms of what acts constitute a violation of boundary norms. More specifically, unwanted touching of more private body spaces such as breasts and/or genitals are contrasted with non-harassing physical contact such as touching someone's knee, hand or putting an arm around another person (61: +4; 27: +3; 49: -4; 54: -5 34: -5). The invasion of someone's personal space in and of itself does not constitute an harassment act, as participant 31 comments "don't feel this is sexual harassment (in relation to 15: -4).

It is possible that non-harassing, potentially 'friendly' acts can be mistaken for sexual harassment. As participant 13 notes initiators of such acts "are trying to be friendly and are not harassing anyone in anyway" (comments for 56: -5). For example, an individual who complimenting a person's looks "is only trying to be nice and not in anyway harassing the receiver" (Participant 13 comments for 19: -6). Thus, for an act to constitute sexual harassment it must be explicitly sexualised or an extreme violation of physical boundary norms.



#### Factor 4: The Boundaries Narrative

							(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment					
						(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(52) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment				
					(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	(4) Adults can sexually harass children	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment			
		(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex			(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment		
	(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment		(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment		
	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(10) Children can sexually harass adults	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(9) Pesterer someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	
(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere
(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticises an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Least Agree

Most Agree

### 6.8 Factor 5: The Unjust Narrative

This factor explains 7.032% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 3.024. One man (Participant 39) and one woman (Participant 21) loaded significantly on this factor. Both participants opted out of returning demographic information.

#### *Interpretation*

As with the first three factors outlined above, this narrative posits abuses of power as central to manifestations of sexual harassment (17:+4). Here, economic power positionings can be used to exploit subordinate workers through, for example, criticisms of a subordinate employee's work performance because he/she has refused sexual advances and/or quid pro quo harassment (12: +5; 24: +5). However, what makes this behaviour problematic is not the unwanted sexual component of such acts per se. Rather the problem lies in the *unfairness* of the initiator's behaviour because "you should get a promotion because you are the *best person* for the job not because you slept with the boss" (Participant 21 comments for 24: +5). Similarly, unwanted physical contact of any part of the body such as breasts and/or genitals is constructed as problematic in terms of individual rights (32: +3; 61: +6; 27: +6). As Participant 21 notes, "if women wanted you to touch her breasts they would say so. Men haven't got *the right* to touch you" (P21 comments for 61: +6). Here, exposure to explicit, extreme sexual content or imagery also appears to violate such individual rights (59:+3; 6: +3; 30: +4; 22: +5). Given that individual rights are prioritised, it should be down to the recipient whose rights have been violated to decide whether sexual harassment has occurred (25: +4).

It is not only exposure to sexualised behaviour or material that constitutes a violation of individual rights. Comments about an individual's private sexual life are also considered harassing. More specifically, suggesting that a particular woman or man sleeps around is unfair because those who chose to have a number of sexual partners "has probably not found the right partner" (P21 comments for 11: +3 & 47: +2). Since multiple partners here is constructed as one way in which people find "the right partner", slurs on a person's sexual reputation are not justified.

In this narrative, for behaviour to constitute sexual harassment it must be seen as unfair and unjust in some way. In principle, any comment or behaviour that undermines a person

because of his/her sex can be a form of harassment. However, excluding individuals from activities on the basis of gender is not necessarily harassing (39: -3). This is because certain roles are gender-typed and so it is not unreasonable or unjust to divide tasks/activities up according to gender. For example, suggesting that child-care and/or housework are women's jobs is unlikely to be harassing because "it is just that women are better at housework than men [so] it is not a form of sexual harassment" (P21 comments for 20: -5; 44:-5).

Particular behaviours that are considered fair, just or 'nice' and thus non-harassing could be complimenting a person's looks, leering, sexual comments about women's or men's clothes and/or wolf whistling (19: -4; 37: -4; 41: -5; 7: -4). As Participant 21 comments "some women like to hear men wolf whistling because it makes them feel attractive" (P27 comments for 7: -4). Similarly, it is not out the realms of possibility that people may enjoy sexual jokes or at least not be offended by them (51: -6). This is not to say that sexual harassment constitutes everything unpleasant. Whilst negative comments about a person's looks might be unpleasant and unfair in the sense that "you can't judge people by the way they look", subjective dislike of someone on this basis is not the right kind of unreasonable behaviour to constitute harassment (P21 comment for 50: -3). In this narrative, sexual harassment appears to be premised on the notion that injustice must stem from sexualised/gendered behaviour.

Given that a specific form of injustice defines the behaviours considered to be problematic, it is perhaps unsurprising that particular everyday behaviours such as beeping a car horn at someone is not considered to be sexually harassing (18: -6)

## Factor 5: The Unjust Narrative

						(4) Adults can sexually harass children						
					(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment					
				(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment				
		(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person				
(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment				
(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(9) Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	(12) A boss who criticises an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment		
(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment
(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(10) Children can sexually harass adults	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Least Agree

Most Agree

### **6.9     *Factor 6: The Dispersed Power Narrative***

Factor 6 explains 6.703% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 2.882. One man (participant 11) and one woman (participant 7) loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 11 was 23 years old and self employed. Participant 7 was 21 years old who at the time of this study was unemployed.

#### *Interpretation*

In this narrative, sexual harassment is a repeated, prolonged experience in which the victim is specifically targeted by the perpetrator and pestered for sex (59: +3; 9: +4). Sexual advances are made using profane or abusive methods such as obscene phone calls, physical touching of the recipient's body such as their genitals or bottom and flashing (2: +5; 9: +4; 6: +3; 32: +5; 27: +3; 46: +3). The question of whether this behaviour stems from the initiator's sexual attraction for the recipient is not central to understanding sexual harassment (40: +1; 28: -5). Instead, this behaviour can be seen as an abuse of power (17: +5). In this narrative, power is handed back to the victim to some extent by prioritising their judgement of whether sexual harassment has occurred (25: +4).

Here power is not seen as derived solely from specific positionings which afford greater power and/or organisational hierarchies (29: +6). Instead, power is seen as more dispersed which allows, for example, adults to sexually harass children but also for children to sexually harass adults (4: +6; 10: +4). The dispersal of power coupled with the conceptualisation of sexual harassment as a means to do power over another allows for same-sex harassment to occur regardless of the sexualities of those involved (28: -5). Nor do gendered forms of power operate in a fixed fashion with women positioned largely as the victims of sexual harassment and men as the perpetrators (57: -5). What is emphasised is that men can also be subject to harassment through, for example, slurs on their sexual reputation (47: +4; 45: +2).

Derogatory comments alone, whether they be sexualised, gendered or heterosexist, are not always sufficient to render an experience as sexual harassment (16: -6; 23: -6; 33: -5; 50: -4). For example making sexual comments about men's clothes does not constitute harassment as "sexual harassment would need to be more serious than merely comments about dress sense (P11 comments for 33: -5). What appears to be crucial to defining something as sexual harassment is the repetitive pattern characterising implicit or explicit requests for sex.

Behaviours which lack obscenity such as touching a pregnant woman's stomach or staring do not resonate obviously with behaviours used to pester someone for sex (58: -4; 42: -4; 9: +4).

## Factor 6: The Dispersed Power Narrative

						(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment						
					(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment					
				(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(55) Any comment or suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive				
		(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment				
	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticises an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(10) Children can sexually harass adults			
(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power		
(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in mainly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	(9) Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere
(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(4) Adults can sexually harass children
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Least Agree												Most Agree

### **6.10 Factor 7: The Relationship Narrative**

This factor explains 5.551% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 2.387. One 60 year old woman (participant 3) who worked as a housing manager in a hostel loaded significantly on this factor.

#### *Interpretation*

In common with the factor 6 discussed above, in this narrative, sexual harassment is conceptualised as a repetitive and prolonged event focused on pestering someone for sex through a series of unwanted intrusions such as obscene phone calls or emails and flashing (2: +5; 38: +3; 6: +5; 30: +6). The emphasis here is on the intrusiveness of this behaviour in the victim's personal life. As such asking the victim personal questions or making comments about their sexual life, sexuality and sexual reputation constitute sexual harassment (21: +3; 47: +4; 11: +4; +3).

The extent to which behaviour is conceptualised as intrusive and inappropriate is largely determined by aspects of the relationship between the initiator and recipient. For example, touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be considered harassing "if done by the wrong person" (P3 comment for 58: +4). Similarly, norms around sexual relationships and conduct make it possible to conceptualise particular adult-child interactions problematic and thus potentially sexually harassing (4: +4). However, norms around appropriate interaction in relationships make it difficult to conceptualise everyday behaviours such as referring someone as 'love', 'dear' or 'darling' or giving someone a compliment about how they look as harassing. These normative standards for conduct do, however, make it difficult to pass off claims of problematic conduct as a result of widespread political correctness or as a result of mistaking friendliness for sexual harassment (60: -5; 56: -4).

While there isn't a difference between sexism and sexual harassment, the emphasis is on inappropriate intrusions or violations of aspects of someone's personal *sexualised* life (14: -6). Therefore, the term 'sexual harassment' does not extend to discriminating acts such as suggesting that child-care and housework is a woman's job or treating pregnant women as if they were invalids (3: -6; 20: -6; 44: -4). Neither does it encompass potentially insulting comments about a person's character or dress sense (55: -3; 33: -3; 52: -3). This is not to say that such behaviour is unproblematic but rather such comments "should be treated with the



contempt it deserves – but [does] not [constitute] sexual harassment” (P3 comments for 20: - 6).

## Factor 7: The Relationship Narrative

						(24) A boss who asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion can be a form of sexual harassment						
					(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment					
				(10) Children can sexually harass adults	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment				
			(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behavior are aimed at a person	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred or not	(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(46) Touching a woman's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere			
		(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(52) Suggesting that woman should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the work place can be a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment		
	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities is a form of sexual harassment	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	
(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticizes an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment
(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	(4) Adults can sexually harass children	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(9) Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
Least Agree												Most Agree

### **6.11 Factor 8: The Coercion Narrative**

This factor explains 4.063% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.747. One participant loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 8 was an 18 year old male student.

#### *Interpretation*

Whilst it is contended in this narrative that in heterosexual encounters it is only natural for men to make a pass at women (57: +5), it is recognised that sexual advances can be coercive. For example, bosses may use their greater economic power to exchange promotions for sex (24: +4), or punish employees for rejecting their advances by criticising the recipient's work performance (12: +5). This coercive activity may also translate into making obscene phone calls as well as perpetrating unwanted physical acts on the victim such as touching their breasts and/or genitals (6: +3; 61: +4; 27: +3). There is a sense of the initiator being deliberately mean or coercive and it seems that women generally are the focus of this kind of coercion (1: +4; 41: +6; 61: +4; 33: -5).

The emphasis on women as victims should not be taken as implying that it is only adult women who are the victims of sexual harassment nor that this behaviour is confined to the workplace (29: +5). Indeed, this sense of coercion is reflected in the ways in which adults may use their position to sexually harass children. It is important to emphasise that the focus on female and/or child victims does not suggest that it is only men who perpetrate sexual harassment as it is possible for anyone to sexually harass others regardless of their sexualities (28: -4).

As well as turning attention to women victims, this narrative focuses on the ways in which sexually harassing behaviour can be used to exclude individuals from activities because of their sexual preference (62: +5). It seems that in this narrative exclusionary practices based on sexualities fit in with the coercive character of sexual harassment. Important to note is that this narrative prioritises issues around sexual advances, practices and sexualities (62: +5; 45: +2; 24: +4; 12: +5). Heterosexism more generally is not conceptualised as harassing per se as there is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment (14: +6). As such heterosexist practices or comments specifically about gender, such as suggesting that house work and/or child-care is a woman's job, or excluding people from activities because of their sex are not considered to be sexual harassment (20: -6; 44: -6; 39: -5; 52: -4). Undermining comments

more generally on the basis of gender and sexuality are not considered to be harassing in the sense that they do not coerce individuals into performing sexualised acts or explicitly act as an exclusionary mechanism (5: -3; 26: -2). The positioning of items suggests that for an act to be labelled as 'sexual harassment' the victim must be put in a situation where they experience the effects of exclusionary and unpleasant behaviour based around sexualities or sexual advances.

Given that in this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment, it is important to note that a range of everyday behaviours are unlikely to be harassing, coercive or exclusionary (60: +3). This may include touching someone's hand, hugging someone, complimenting a person's looks, being called darling or telling sexual jokes (54: -4; 31: -3; 19: -3; 48: -3; 51: -3). It is generally these kinds of actions that are likely to fall outside of the definition of sexual harassment in this narrative.

## Factor 8: The Coercion Narrative

							(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment					
						(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment				
				(34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	(18) Beeping car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment				
		(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred or not				
	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(19) Complimenting a person looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	(10) Children can sexually harass adults	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(4) Adults can sexually harass children	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment			
	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be a mistaken for sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	
(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment if comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(9) Pestered someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment
(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	(12) A boss who criticizes an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

Least Agree

Most Agree

### **6.12 Factor 9: The Context Narrative**

Whilst this factor appears as the tenth factor identified in the statistical analysis, in this section it will be referred to as factor 9. This is because the factor which technically precedes it could not be interpreted due to the lack of significantly loading Q sorts (see also chapter 5). This factor explains 3.816% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.641. Participant 35 loaded significantly on this factor. This participant was a man who worked in IT and was in his late 30s.

#### *Interpretation*

Two main issues appear to be central to this narrative. Firstly, as its name suggests, actions require sufficient contextualisation to determine whether they are harassing or not. Secondly, there is a sense from the placing of statements coupled with participant comments that the issue of sexual harassment should not be taken too seriously. These issues will be explicated in the following interpretation.

As with factor 8, some claims of sexual harassment can be considered ridiculous as it's only natural for men to make a pass at women (57: +4). The process of making a sexual advance may involve leering or staring but "only in hope" of reciprocal attraction which makes these actions non-harassing (P35 comment for 42: -5; 37: -5). Whilst it is acknowledged that pestering someone for sex can be a form of harassment, participant 35 comments that he "won't feel harassed if they pester me!!" (9: +6). This comment can be read as suggesting that the issue here is not necessarily with the behaviour per se but whether it is welcomed or not. The light-hearted, humorous tone of this reply to this statement is also evident in participant comments related to the statement that behaviours which position the recipient as immature can be a form of sexual harassment (55: +6). Here it is noted that "they [the initiator and recipient] should shake hands and grow up!!" This comment positions both the initiator and recipient as childish. This, coupled with light-hearted reply that pestering for sex would be, in some circumstances welcomed, undermines the seriousness of sexual harassment claims as well as trivialising acts as immature rather than harassment.

The trivialisation of sexually harassing acts can further be seen in the positioning of other statements. For example, suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment "unless it's with me!!" (P35 comment for 11: +4). Similarly, suggesting that a man

sleeps around can also constitute harassment. However, it is also noted that men “love it” (P35 comment for 47: +4).

What is emphasised in this narrative is that while some acts are to a greater or lesser extent straightforwardly harassment or non-harassing, most others require contextualisation. For example, touching someone’s bottom appears to represent a reasonably clear-cut act of harassment, with participant 35 simply responding “yeah” to this statement (46: +4). Similarly, certain acts are constituted as obviously acceptable behaviour. For instance, complimenting a person’s looks are non-harassing as it would “be nice if someone did” (P35 comments for 19: -6). Nor is the act of telling sexual jokes particularly harassing, as participant 35 sarcastically comments, “I think it’s called a sense of humour” (comments for 51: -4). However, some acts such as making obscene phone calls “depend” on the circumstances and are as such less clear-cut (P35 comment for 6: +3). Moreover, in the course of day –to- day living, some behaviour such as receiving emails can be experienced as “just harassment full stop” which can be read as making it difficult to distinguish between harassment and sexual harassment (P35 comments for 38: +3). The same could be true of behaviours which invade someone’s personal space, as this could be “just harassment” rather than sexual harassment (P35 comments for 15: +2).

In a similar vein, comments such as calling someone ‘darling’ can only be read as harassing in certain situations. As participant 35 states, being called ‘darling’ can be sexually harassing “only if it comes after ‘make the tea’” (48: -4). Important to note is that other similar terms of reference such as being called ‘dear’ are contextualised differently as age-related expressions. This can be seen in participant 35’s comment that “being called ‘dear’ means you’re passed it” (8: -3).

Continuing this line of argument, this narrative stresses the ways in which practical considerations might become relevant when contextualising an incident. For example, treating pregnant women like invalids may be acceptable rather than harassing as “they ain’t exactly in peak fitness” (P35 comment for 3: -3). Similarly, some exclusionary practices may well have a practical and reasonable basis in some contexts. This can be seen in the positioning of the act of excluding people from activities on the basis of sexual preference as non-harassing, with participant 35 commenting sarcastically “yeah - why not let every paedophile be Santa at Xmas” (comment for 62: -6). The same logic applies to exclusion

based on sex. In response to this, participant 35 again sarcastically replies: “yeah...I keep getting stopped from changing in the women’s dressing rooms” (39: -4).

The need to contextualise the initiator’s behaviour is necessary as some acts are not intentionally offensive (1: +5). For example, having pornographic images in the workplace may not be a deliberate act of sexual harassment, with participant 35 commenting that such images “are not [sexual harassment] to me...if you can’t have your own space –f’em”. Given that making sense of potentially sexually harassing events is complicated by particular contextualising issues, the person on the receiving end should not be the one who decides whether they have been harassed as “people tend to get things wrong” (P35 comments for 25: -2). Misunderstandings of what behaviour might mean can lead to both flirting and friendliness being mistaken as sexual harassment so here it is important to only find someone guilty of problematic conduct if they intended to offend a particular individual (35: +5; 56: +5; 1: +5; 59: +3).



## Factor 9: The Context Narrative

						(13) Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual						
					(12) A boss that criticizes an employee's work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual	(5) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(7) Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment					
				(25) The person on the receiving end should be the one to decide whether sexual harassment has occurred	(24) A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment	(26) Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	(18) Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(32) Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment				
		(53) Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	(60) In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	(23) Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(20) Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(21) Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	(17) Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	(38) Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment				
	(51) Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	(50) Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(30) Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	(16) Calling a man gay because he will not engage in mainly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	(45) Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	(4) Adults can sexually harass children	(15) Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	(6) Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	(46) Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment			
	(37) Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	(40) Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	(3) Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	(27) Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment	(49) Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment	(29) Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	10) Children can sexually harass adults	(14) There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	(2) Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	(47) Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(56) Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	
(62) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	(42) Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	(39) Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	58) Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	(61) Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	(31) Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	(54) Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	28) Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	(52) Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(44) Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	(11) Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	(35) Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	(55) Any comment or behaviour that suggests a person is immature
(19) Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	(22) Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	(48) Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment	(8) Being called "dear" can be a form of sexual harassment	(36) Being called "love" can be a form of sexual harassment	(41) Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(43) Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	34) A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	(33) Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	(59) You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	(57) Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	(1) A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	(9) Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment
<b>-6</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+6</b>
<b>Least Agree</b>												<b>Most Agree</b>

### ***6.13 Stories of Sexual Harassment: Similarities & Differences***

As mentioned earlier, one problem identified in previous literature is the predominant tendency for victims, as well as people more generally, to treat ‘mundane’ ‘everyday’ experiences of unwanted gendered/sexualised conduct in general and sexism(s) in particular as a distinct phenomenon to sexual harassment. The non-labelling of more routine instances of problematic gendered/sexualised behaviour has raised concerns that it is being (re) produced as ‘normal’ behaviour rather than as manifestation of gendered power. The nine narratives identified point to the ways in which the question of whether sexism is a form of sexual harassment is neither straightforward nor polarised. This can be seen not only in the identification of multiple narratives but also, in some cases, within specific narratives. To explicate this point, I will focus on how narratives contextualise three issues that have been central to the body of work of non-labelling: (1) sexism(s), (2) power, and (3) the normalisation of gendered/sexual violence as ‘just sex’.

### ***6.14 Sexisms***

The statement – (14) there is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment – was strongly prioritised in three of the narratives (factors 1, 4 and 8) as central to the specific story being told. The Sex(-ism) narrative (Factor 1) resonates strongly with accounts in previous literature where the term ‘sexual harassment’ is used to refer to explicitly sexualised, extreme acts, with sexism(s) situated outside of the boundaries of sexually harassing conduct (14: +6) (e.g. Epstein, 1997; Monson, 1997). However, important to note, is that while various manifestations of sexism(s) did not constitute sexual harassment here, they were problematised using other conceptualisations of gendered practice such ‘sexism’ and ‘discrimination’. The location of sexism(s) as a problem despite being seen as distinct from sexual harassment resonates with Lee’s (2001) claim that the non-use of the label ‘sexual harassment’ is not synonymous with acceptance of unwanted conduct. Rather, Lee argues that people (particularly women) use a range of terms to draw attention to the ways in which gendered behaviour is inappropriate. In a similar vein to the Sex(-ism) narrative, the Boundaries

narrative (Factor 4), prioritises the difference between sexism and sexual harassment to make the argument that the latter is about explicitly sexualised conduct – the issue of sexism(s) is outwith the focus of the narrative (14: +4). Here, there appears to be links to Epstein's (1997) assertion that in the case of particular experiences of sexism "it can be difficult to define harassment as 'sexual' when, in common sense terms, it is not" (P. 156).

However, when turning to the Coercion narrative (Factor 8), the situation becomes increasingly complex. Whilst like the previous two narratives, the difference between sexism and sexual harassment is positioned as important to this narrative (14: +6), it is used to draw attention to the difference between the two issues in a particular way. More specifically, in this narrative, distinctions are made between sexisms that count as sexual harassment, with heterosexist practices of exclusion by sexuality falling within the boundary of sexual harassment but gendered sexisms falling outside the limits of this particular understanding.

Making distinctions between sexisms was not specific to the Coercion narrative. The remaining narratives, whilst not prioritising the difference between sexism and sexual harassment, nevertheless made particular sexism(s) relevant in various ways to understanding sexual harassment. For example, the difference between the two issues was tentatively agreed with and assigned a rank position of +2 in the Equal Opportunities narrative (Factor 3), the Dispersed Power narrative (Factor 6) and the Context narrative (Factor 9). However, this issue took on different meanings in the context of these narratives.

Despite the indication that the difference between sexism and sexual harassment was of moderate importance to the Equal Opportunities narrative, it nevertheless prioritised a range of sexist practices as central to understanding sexual harassment. This narrative resonates with recent versions of sex discrimination law discussed in Chapter 3 – the Equal Treatment Amendment Directive (2003) - which unlike earlier sex discrimination laws focuses on unequal practices based

on sexualities as well as on gender. In this narrative, whilst some sexism may be different to some forms of sexually harassing behaviour, this does not preclude them from understandings of discriminating sexualised/gendered practice. In contrast, in the Dispersed Power narrative, forms of sexism based on gender are outwith the focus of this narrative and particular forms of sexism centring on sexualities are positioned as falling outside the definition of sexual harassment. Instead what is prioritised is the ways in which repeated prolonged sexual acts constitute sexual harassment which is akin to definitions which focus on harassment as a repetitive act (e.g. Guirdham, 2002). Unlike the Equal Opportunities and Dispersed Power narrative, the Context narrative positions exclusionary forms of sexism as potentially non-harassing because of possible 'appropriate' gendered/sexualised reasons for disparate treatment.

The Relationship narrative (Factor 7) and the Vulnerable Victim narrative (Factor 2) both, to varying degrees, disagree that there is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment. The Relationship narrative is the only narrative which strongly prioritises the similarity of sexism and sexual harassment (14: -5). If this statement was read in isolation, a reasonable assumption to make about this positioning is that the term 'sexual harassment' would refer to a range of sexist practices. However, when read in relation to the positionings of other issues and considerations in this narrative it quickly becomes apparent that this is not the case. Conduct which could be read as sexism is either not central to the narrative or is disagreed with. Instead, what is focused on is the way in which sexual harassment represents a violation of norms around personal boundaries and relationships. However, like the Sex(isms) narrative, this does not mean to say that particular sexism is treated as acceptable but rather are problematised using other means. The Vulnerable Victim, however, only tentatively positions sexism and sexual harassment as similar (14: -2) and positions a range of sexism, to varying degrees, as sexual harassment. As noted above, what is emphasised here is the ways in which power relations based on sex, sexuality and age make particular groups vulnerable to problematic conduct.

The Unjust narrative (Factor 5) is the only one in which statement 14 – there is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment - is positioned as more clearly outwith the focus of the narrative (+1). However, as mentioned above the (re)production of gendered roles as well as exclusionary gendered/sexualised practices are not considered to be sexually harassing as it argued that in particular circumstances a specific gender group is more competent at performing gender-typed tasks. Here, unequal treatment between men and women is appropriate because they do not share the same skills and competencies. It appears that this narrative draws on the same liberal version of equality which underpins the 1975 Sexual Discrimination act which contends that equals should be treated alike and unequals should be treated differently. However, for unequal treatment to be justified, the differences must be relevant to the issues at hand. As argued in chapter 3, this version of equality is problematic because it ignores the ways in which similar treatment of men and women can nevertheless impact one gender group in specific, problematic ways and thus (re)produce gendered power relations (e.g. Crouch, 2001).

### **6.15 Power & Sex**

As with the issue of sexism(s), considerations about the operation of power were complexly constructed in and across the narratives identified. Six of the narratives strongly prioritised sexual harassment as an abuse of power (statement 17). However, the positioning of sexual harassment as an act of power became constituted in narratives in diverse ways, particularly in relation to the construct of ‘normal’ sex . For example, within the Sex(-isms) narrative, whilst it is tentatively acknowledged that sexual harassment, in some circumstances may be related to the initiator’s sexual attraction for the recipient (40: -2), it avoids claims that unwanted sexual advances are a ‘natural’ part of ‘normal’ sex (57: - 2). Instead, what is prioritised here is the ways in which sexual harassment is a tool to do power over others (17: +4). A similar argument is interwoven through the Vulnerable Victim narrative (17: +4; 57: -3; 40: -4) and the Unjust narrative (17: +4; 57: -2; 40: -2). However what is emphasised in the Vulnerable Victims narrative is that sexual harassment is a means of doing power over those in

vulnerable gendered/sexualised/age-related positionings. Again, a different point is made in the Unjust narrative, with its focus on power as a violation of individual rights. Unlike the Vulnerable Victim narrative which draws attention to sexualised/gendered aspects of sexual harassment, the Unjust narrative draws on notions of liberal humanism to position sexual harassment as a barrier to fair practices for the *individual* concerned.

In a similar vein to the narratives mentioned above, the Equal Opportunities narrative strongly characterises sexual harassment as an abuse of power. However, what is stressed here is that sexual harassment has nothing to do with ‘natural’ sexual advances nor sexual attraction. Rather it is a form of power which when deployed discriminates against people on the basis of gender and sexuality. This version of sexual harassment is not unlike claims that sexual harassment is not about sex per se but a means of doing and maintaining power (e.g. Lee, 2001). The Dispersed Power narrative also strongly prioritises the ways in which sexual harassment can be conceptualised as an abuse of power and discounts the notion that repeated explicit sexualised acts are an expression of men’s ‘natural’ behaviour towards women. This narrative, however, does not conceptualise power as something that some social groups possess or have greater access to compared others. Instead, power is seen as dispersed, allowing a diversity of individual’s access to power through sexually harassing acts.

For the Relationship narrative the conceptualisation of sexual harassment as an abuse of power is of moderate importance to this narrative (17: +3). There is tentative agreement with both the notions that sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction (40: +2) and sexual harassment might be the expression of ‘natural’ sexual behaviour from men to women. These points are reconciled in this narrative by recourse to the idea that sexual harassment represents a violation of personal relationship norms which can be done in the presence or absence of sexual attraction and/or in the course of making ‘normal’ sexual advances.

In contrast to the above narratives, the characterisation of sexual harassment is an abuse of power is neither central to the Boundaries narrative or the Coercion Narrative. In the Boundaries narrative, issues focused on whether sexual harassment is part of 'normal' heterosexual or a manifestation of sexual attraction is outwith the focus of the narrative. Rather this narrative characterises the issue of sexual harassment as a manifestation of problematic sexualised behaviour and focuses on making distinctions between sexualised harassing behaviour from non-sexualised and hence non-harassing conduct. The Coercion narrative on the other hand does make the point that while it's only 'natural' for men to make a pass at women, the phenomenon of sexual harassment is, to some degree, unrelated to 'normal' sexual attraction (40: +2) and more concerned with deliberate coercion.

Like the Coercion narrative, the Context narrative prioritises the naturalness of men's sexual advances to women and positions sexual attraction as relatively central to the phenomenon of sexual harassment. Unlike the other narratives, while it is tentatively acknowledged that sexual harassment can be conceptualised as an abuse of power, it tends to trivialise the phenomenon as a childish disagreement.

#### **6.16 Summary: Moving Towards the Multiple**

The multiplicity of narratives identified, the ways in which they are composed of a diversity of considerations including those centred on sexist/power practices, suggest that it is not the case that the prioritisation of sexualised manifestations of sexual harassment necessarily preclude particular sexism in understandings of sexual harassment. Nor is it always the case that behaviours falling outside the boundaries of sexual harassment in particular narratives are positioned as 'normal', rendered acceptable and/or trivialised. Rather, it seems that these issues are contextualised differently depending on specific boundaries created within the story that is being told.

Important to note is that I make no claims that the narratives identified here exhaustively describe all narratives available. Nor do I claim that the inclusion of

particular issues in understandings of sexual harassment make them somehow unproblematic. Rather, I would argue that the narratives identified here point to the need to move away from polarised conceptualisations of issues in sexual harassment as well as the need to look not only at what is being problematised but how this problematisation takes place. This would allow for a more contextualised reading of the implications of labelling and non-labelling behaviour.

Consideration of boundaries around the construct of sexual harassment is continued in the next chapter which uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore interview data. In chapter 7, the focus is shifted to how the public-private dichotomy is discursively deployed to (re)produce specific boundaries around acceptable and unacceptable sexual conduct.



## **Chapter 7: Politicising the Personal? Unwanted Sexual Attention as a Private Relation**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, Foucauldian discourse analysis is used to explore constructions of the public/private dichotomy in interview data. This analysis focuses on the ways in which constructions of the public/private dichotomy are deployed to produce unwanted sexual attention as a problem arising from the private realm of personal, intimate relationships. This chapter explores two main constructions of the workplace: (1) the constitution of the workplace as the public sphere, a space demarcated from personal relationships, feelings and behaviour; and (2) the workplace as an increasingly personalised sphere. I will argue that the construction of the workplace as a public sphere allows unwanted sexual attention to be constructed as a violation of formalised work etiquette. The positioning of unwanted sexual attention as a violation allows recipients to be positioned as the *victim* and initiators to be positioned as the *perpetrator* of an *offence*. However, versions of the workplace which prioritise increased emphasis on the personalisation of employee relations are used to construct the issue of *victimisation* between colleagues as less clear-cut. The construction of unwanted sexual attention as a personal relation works to position it as a permissible problem in private relationships. Lastly, I will explore how unwanted sexual attention occurring in private spaces and relationships rather than public ones are constituted as risky because dealing with it demands the negotiation of interpersonal relationships and emotions.

### **7.2 Constructing (In) Formal Working Relations**

Within the literature, the public/private distinction has been variously represented as “different realms of experience and value, spatially and temporally, separated and epitomised by different sorts of people and roles” (Slater, 1998: 144). As discussed in Chapter 2, this distinction between public and private has been deployed to maintain gendered power relations in the workplace. Wage labour has traditionally been constructed as a masculinised preserve which is reflected in the

ways in which idealised working relations have been variously characterised as rational, formal and efficient (Corroto, 2005).

According to Mott and Condor (1997) the ideal of the effective worker and worker relations has undergone a shift since the late 1940s. Prior to the Second World War, the ideal of bureaucratic life focused on impersonal, formalised working relations in which employees were “cooperative strangers” (Moore, 1962: 87). However, this ideal has been superseded by conceptualisations in which workers are “treated less as physical bodies or anonymous role occupants from whom labour can be exacted, and more as individuals with feelings and social needs to be met within the workplace” (Mott and Condor, 1997: 53). Within this latter conceptualisation of the worker, liberal humanist discourses of valuing the individual become interwoven with conceptions of productive labour. As Rose (1990) points out, informality, friendship and pleasure become a prerequisite for productivity. The personalisation of the workplace has, in various ways, become interwoven with notions of femininity. The shift towards more personalised working styles such as delegated decision making, participative leadership styles and so on have been gendered as feminine (Ball, 2004). These feminised working strategies have been argued to personalise otherwise formal working roles (e.g. Hochschild, 1983; Ball, 2004).

The personalisation of the workplace produces particular tensions in relation to sexual violence in organisational settings. Minson (1993) points out that the conceptualisation of the workplace as a formal arena in which private relationships and emotions do not belong provides some protection against unwanted sexual attention on the job. This is because sex, sexuality and intimate relationships have been variously represented as belonging to the private sphere (Brewis and Linstead, 2000). Minson (1993) further argues that it may be difficult to argue that sexualised behaviour is inappropriate at work due to the shift from formal bureaucratic employment norms to the workplace as an increasingly personalised space in which informality is encouraged.

To explore the ways in which unwanted sexual attention becomes constituted as a personal relation both inside and outside the workplace, I will focus on four constructions identified. These were: (1) hierarchical power; (2) unwanted sexual attention as a personal relation; (3) the subjective as a complication; and (4) public/private and risk. Each construction will be addressed in turn in the following sections.

### **7.3 Hierarchical Power**

The positioning of sexual violence in the workplace as an abuse of formalised power is one way in which unwanted sexual attention on the job has been constructed as problematic. The hierarchical organisation of job positions within employment have been predominantly represented as giving rise to sexual harassment in the workplace (e.g. Mackinnon, 1979; Payne, 1993; Bower, 1993; Dougherty, 2006). More specifically, a number of scholars have argued that power differentials between higher ranking and subordinate workers provide opportunities for superiors to exploit subordinates sexually (e.g. Mackinnon, 1979; Payne, 1993; Bower, 1993). The construction of unwanted sexual attention as an exploitation of power differentials in employment rank can be seen in the following excerpt from Steve's account:

*S: I think sometimes you can to a certain extent receive power, power in your job.*

*L: Yeah.*

*S: And you think that just because somebody's lower down the ladder than you, you can get away with pretty much anything, or you can get away with a lot more than if someone's more equal in your job or certainly in the work environment*

Here, unwanted sexual attention is constructed as an abuse of hierarchical power. The initiator's power to harass is derived from their higher position within the work hierarchy which allows them to exploit subordinates because their job-related power allows them to "get away with pretty much anything". In Steve's

account, unwanted sexual attention between equally situated colleagues is constructed as unlikely to occur because of the absence of hierarchical power relations. The ways in which sexual attention becomes exploitative in the context of hierarchical relations is discussed by Nola below:

*N: [The]Power thing is a big debate there, whether it's from a senior person at work, the boss or you know management that adds a whole other dimension to it. And it sort of, when, when do you say no excuse me you're being out of order, when do you worry oh I'm going to lose my job or get passed over for promotion' or whatever.*

*L: Yeah.*

*N: That's, that's more much more power thing isn't it, that rarely starts with just innocent flirting, very much a power thing from a management's point of view*

Again, unwanted sexual attention is constituted as an abuse of hierarchical power in the workplace. Subordinate work positions are associated with powerlessness and dependence on the goodwill of senior members for maintaining or increasing income and/or work status. Hierarchical positionings are constructed as complicating the issue of sexual refusal because of the subordinate workers economic vulnerability. This can be seen in the questions described in the above excerpt which refer to issues one might ask themselves when negotiating unwanted sexual attention from a senior employee – “when do you say no excuse me you’re being out of order when do you worry ‘oh I’m going to lose my job’”. The senior person is constituted here as abusing or exploiting power through the description of it as a “power thing” which positions the initiator as deviating from normative, acceptable sexual behaviour. There is a clear sense here that senior employees recognise the potential for power exploitation in hierarchically organised workplaces. The notion that senior members are *aware* that sexual attention between higher- and lower-ranking employees is an abuse of power constitutes the behaviour as a clear-cut offence with subordinates being positioned

as victim and senior employees as perpetrators. The construction of worker awareness of power exploitation between higher and lower ranking staff can be seen further in Alan's account:

A: *I think they would usually be aware of what's right and what's wrong. For example in issues of um sexual harassment in the workplace*

L: *Yeah*

A: *the, the boss knows that if he pinches his secretary's backside*

L: *Yeah*

A: *the, that isn't really the done thing, particularly now, you know maybe ten twenty years ago it was*

L: *Yeah*

A: *but now it it's politically incorrect that statement's come about as a result of greater social awareness of sexual discrimination in the workplace. As, as one example, therefore, he knows it's wrong and unless he can argue that he can't distinguish right from wrong, then I think he's completely aware that that when he when he does it um then it is the wrong thing to do*

By drawing on the legalistic work discourse, the boss is positioned as both someone who knows about gendered power exploitation in the workplace and someone who is responsible for enforcing "sexual discrimination" laws in the workplace. These positionings work to emphasise the initiator as a perpetrator of an offence because "he's completely aware ... it is the wrong thing to do".

Interestingly, unlike the excerpts discussed above, Alan makes explicit reference to the *gendering* of hierarchical positionings in the workplace. As Mackinnon (1979) notes, within hierarchically organised workplaces "women are generally men's subordinates on the job, with men in the position to do the hiring, firing, supervising and promoting of women". This can be seen here with the positioning

of the male employee as boss and the woman employee as his direct subordinate. However, this description of the male boss and female secretary also draws attention to the ways in which subordinate positions in the workplace have often been traditionally located as 'women's work' which has been characterised as involving so-called 'lower'-order roles such as typists, file clerks, receptionists for example (e.g. Mackinnon, 1979; see also Chapter 2).

Secretarial work is predominantly represented as "woman's work" (Mott and Condor, 1997). The job specifications of secretarial work, in common with other kinds of 'women's work', tend to blur public and private roles in the sense that the employment position not only requires the woman to act as an effective worker but also requires the display of feminine characteristics such as being caring, socially sensitive, amicable and loyal (Mott and Condor, 1997). The secretary has traditionally been treated as an 'office wife' where they will not only undertake secretarial duties but also perform care-related tasks for their boss (Mott and Condor, 1997). Indeed, Hearn (1989) argues that the boss-secretary relationship reflects traditional representations of the patriarchal master in which women are positioned as in service to men (Hearn, 1989). The positioning of the boss as a patriarch is reflected in the description of the recipient as "his secretary" which provides a sense of ownership.

Through the description of the secretary in this account, she is positioned as not only subject to differentials in organisational power but also power imbalances in the gender hierarchy which are both emphasised through the use of the phrase "sexual discrimination". The location of the secretary within these power relations renders her an unequivocal victim. Thus, as with the positionings of the initiator and recipient in all excerpts discussed in this section, hierarchical power relations work to position unambiguously the recipient's status as victim and the initiator as perpetrator.

#### **7.4 Unwanted Sexual Attention as a Personal Relation**

Unwanted sexual attention on the job was not only constructed as exploitation of hierarchical power relations but also as an infraction of norms around the personal sphere. This can be seen in Nola's description of what counts as unwanted sexual attention in the workplace:

*N: ... Just references to you, an attempts to touch or grab or just get too close, um squeezing through a corridor when there's obviously enough room an they really don't have to press themselves up against you like that or whatever*

Unwanted sexual attention on the job is constructed as forced physical intimacy were the initiator "attempts to touch or grab or just get too close". The initiator's behaviour is constituted as intentionally encroaching on an individual's personal space which is implied through the idea that there is enough physical space to avoid "pressing themselves up against you". Similarly, Samantha defines unwanted sexual attention as contravening norms around an individual's personal life:

*L: ... What does the phrase unwanted sexual attention mean to you?*

*S: Um, just somebody invading your personal space.*

*L: Um*

*S: You know like it could, could be either saying stuff to you, about, about your sexuality or it could be someone physically touching you in a way that you find (.) you know, um, insulting,*

*....*

*L: You say sexuality, what did you mean by that?*

*S: Um, it could mean anything from, you know, whether what you prefer men or women or it could be you're not in a regular relationship, and you have few partners, you know, it could be*

*anything like that. You could be called a slag for sleeping around a lot or a virgin if you don't*

Sex, sexuality and the body are constructed as a 'personal space' which serves to locate these aspects of an individual's life within the personal sphere. The examples Samantha gives of unwanted sexual attention are of behaviours that deviate from the norms of heterosexuality and from normative feminine sexuality. In this account, women's sexuality is framed by what Cowie and Lees (1987) call the 'drag-or-slag dichotomy' in which 'slags' are othered by the ways active feminine sexuality is constituted within the Madonna/Whore dichotomy. On the other hand, drags are problematised through their unwillingness to engage in hetero-sex. Thus, women tread a fine line when negotiating issues around sexual reputation (e.g. Kitinger, 1995). Implied in this account is that these forms of unwanted sexual attention are problematic precisely because they violate aspects of an individual's personal life. Violation of norms around an individual's personal life is elaborated on in the following extract where Samantha discusses an incident of unwanted sexual attention in the workplace:

*S: ... There used to be this bloke at work who was openly gay*

*L: Um*

*S: and he used to get called a queen and everything and sometimes it was, you know, you could see them taking it as a joke, other times I think it really insulted him.*

*L: Yeah*

*S: And, you know, it's not nice for somebody at work to be able to do that to you ... there have got to be certain boundaries that if you cross over them then it's going to far*

Here, the recipient becomes the focus of unwanted sexual attention because he is constituted as deviating from normative heterosexuality. This can be seen through the use of derogatory description of him as "queen". The construction of this comment as a possible joke draws attention to informalised employee relations in



this workplace. As Pryor (1995) points out, humour in the workplace plays a crucial function is personalising working relationships and promoting fun and friendship. However, Watts (2007) argues that “because humour in all its representations contains some measure of ambiguity, it allows insult, disrespect, ridicule and slur to enter into dialogue” (p, 260).

The ways in which humour can function as a disguised insult or punishment has been identified as one common manifestation of sexually harassing behaviours (e.g. Stockdale, 2005; Mott and Condor, 1997). The ambiguity in humour allows initiators of offensive jokes to disclaim intention of harm or wrongdoing because jokes are generally represented as ‘good’ in the sense they play a role in having fun (Watts, 2007; Mott and Condor, 1997). This ambiguity serves to create a sense of uncertainty around whether the recipient can legitimately be positioned as victim and the initiator a perpetrator because it becomes unclear as to whether an offence has occurred.

In this account, unwanted behaviour is constituted as problematic through the use of liberal humanist versions of personalised working relations. More specifically, the behaviour is described as ‘not nice’ which draws on liberal humanist versions of the ‘friendly’ office in which the feelings and social needs of individuals are valued (e.g. Mott and Condor, 1997). The behaviour is also constituted as unacceptable by the depiction of it crossing a boundary between formalised working relations and the private sphere. This can be seen in the explicit problematisation of “somebody at *work*” commenting on a work colleague’s personal life. Samantha, when referring to this particular incident of unwanted sexual attention later on in the interview, draws the distinction between the personal and the public sphere more explicitly:

*S: What they are, what they do, in their own spare time, which you know has nothing to do with them*

In Samantha's account, what individuals do in their "spare time", in their private life, is constructed as something distinct from formalised relations in the public space of the workplace. It is through the construction of a boundary between the public and private spheres of individual life that unwanted sexual attention in the workplace becomes problematic.

In some participant accounts, employee relationships were constituted as both formal and more personalised. The personalisation of formal working relations produces particular tensions around making sense of unwanted sexual attention as a clear violation of normative formal relationships. Indeed, expressions of unwanted sexual attention appear to be made possible in the workplace by the endorsement of personalised relationships between colleagues. This can be seen in Diane's account where she discusses her relationship with her previous boss:

*D: ... Some people really invade your personal space. I had a boss that used to do that but because I got on with him and I liked him*

*L: Yeah*

*D: but I knew he was doing it, but it didn't make me feel uncomfortable, you know, he'd ask you to do something and he'd touch your hand because that he thought that would make you say yes, and I'd say I know what your doing, I know your touching me and I'm not going to do it.*

*L: [laugh]*

*D: Touch my hand, it doesn't help*

Diane highlights multiple aspects of her relationship with her colleague in this context – he is her "boss" which draws attention to the status-related power differentials between them. As mentioned earlier, hierarchical power relationships within the workplace have been used to constitute cases of unwanted sexual attention as problematic as well as a clear-cut offence within the workplace. Here, the boss' behaviour is constituted as inappropriate in that it is constructed as

violating norms around personal space. However, the boss is also located in a permissible intimacy discourse in which his behaviour is positioned as to some extent allowable because it occurs within a personalised relationship in which she “got on” and “liked” him. The construction of their personal relationship serves to mitigate the boss’s positioning as perpetrator of unwanted sexual attention and works to normalise the behaviour as part of their informal relationship.

Unwanted sexual attention in this excerpt is constructed as an interpersonal tactic used by the boss to persuade his employee(s) to perform tasks. This particular depiction of unwanted sexual attention serves to *desexualise* unwanted sexual attention which further undermines the positioning of the boss as a perpetrator of a sexualised offence. Diane is not constructed as a victim because she did not feel “uncomfortable” by her boss’ actions. Instead, she is positioned as actively resisting his behaviour. Thus, the personalisation of relationships between initiators and recipients works to position unwanted sexual attention as a normal if not unwanted part of informal interaction.

The ways in which personalised behaviours make unwanted sexual attention possible and permissible in the workplace can be further seen in the following excerpt from Mike’s interview:

*M: I suppose physical would be, you know, the unwanted hand, um the and anything where it goes beyond the realms of what's acceptable, um touching shouldn't, shouldn't happen but does especially in industry though init.*

*L: Oh right.*

*M: [Cough.] Oh yeah, you got you know, I mean you'd all, I dunno so much now, certainly not in the environment I work in, but you know previously, when I was in industry you would get the boss who would put hands round the shoulder, gave them a little tap on the bottom as they walked past, something like that and ah yeah, obviously, not everyone finds that*

*appealing xxx if you find that appealing.*

*L: [Laugh]*

*M: But yeah, I've seen it happen in an office environment but it didn't get to the stage where it became really bad, it was it, it was sort of dealt with and sorted, but nothing official which you know nowadays is a bit worrying?*

*L: xxx*

*M: Um a quiet word in the chap's ear, really don't do it you're making this woman feel uncomfortable, don't do it anymore and he his was the standard stock answer. Oh I didn't realise that, we're just friends, so yes there's that as well*

Here, the initiator is variously positioned in formalised spaces (e.g. “the boss”) and informalised spaces (e.g. “chap”, “friend”) which serves to highlight personalised relationships between colleagues in the workplace. This sense of informality is further conveyed in the description of unwanted physical acts where the boss is constructed as moving beyond formalised work behaviours to more intimate physical behaviour such as putting “hands round the shoulder”. Similarly, describing touching someone’s bottom as “a little tap” serves to construct this behaviour as playful which again locates this behaviour in the realms of the informal.

Mike highlights informality as a problem in terms of challenging unwanted sexual attention in the workplace. Physically intimate behaviour is constructed as something that is allowed in friendship. Thus, the question of what kind of interaction is ‘allowed’ between individuals who are friends as well as work colleagues becomes an increasingly complex one to answer. Here, informality provides the initiator with a “standard stock answer” to claims that he has behaved inappropriately. By drawing on the ‘permissible intimacy’ discourse, the initiator can be positioned as ‘friend’. This serves to construct intimate behaviour as acceptable. This use of notions of intimacy and informality in the context of the workplace resonate with Minson’s (1993) claim that the conceptualisation of the

workplace as a personalised space in which informality is encouraged may make it difficult to argue that sexualised behaviour is inappropriate at work. The construction of particular forms of informality as providing a means with which to 'do' unwanted sexual behaviour can be seen further in Gillian's account:

*L: Can you think of any examples, sort of specific kinds of behaviours that you might count as unwanted sexual attention?*

*G: Yes, Yes, I've got a humdinger.*

*L: Oh great [laugh]excellent.*

*G: Well [Name] apparently was working at [Name of organisation] which is what she does, someplace or other, and this new manager came in, and I think at their Christmas do or something, they you know have a staff raffle type thing, and apparently he put all the names on, in his, on a piece of paper in his pockets*

*L: Umm*

*G: and then he ask some pretty female employee*

*L: oh right*

*G: to come and draw a name out of his pocket his trouser pocket.*

*L: oh right*

*G: And he'd said, you know, 'oh what's in my pocket?', and, and God, isn't that, ah God, that's just so gross and sordid and disgusting. Anyway obviously he didn't dare ask [Name] who's really harrumph and you know sticks up for herself.*

*L: Yeah*

*G: and er, he said to some girl what's in my pocket? And [Name] said a court case [laugh]*

Gillian contextualises this example of unwanted sexual attention as occurring at a "Christmas do" at work. This context blends notions of formal and informal relations since workplace Christmas parties provide an *informal* situation in which

individuals with *formal working roles and relations* can participate. As with the description of the initiator in the excerpt from Mike's interview above, the perpetrator's formal working role is made explicit; he is the "new manager". The initiator's greater hierarchical power over the recipient is implied by the absence of an official working title in the description of her.

In Gillian's account, however, it appears that unwanted sexual attention is made possible through use of the informal context rather than hierarchical power relations *per se*. More specifically, the initiator uses humour or sexual innuendo to direct sexualised behaviour at the recipient. As mentioned earlier, the ambiguity of humour can provide opportunities for initiators of unwanted sexual attention to disclaim any offensiveness caused through recourse to the representation of jokes as harmless fun (e.g. Watts, 2007; Stockdale, 2005). This can be seen here where the initiator uses humour to 'do' unwanted sexual attention.

The sexualisation of this particular example of workplace 'banter' is reinforced by the description of the recipient as "pretty" which implies the initiator may find her sexually attractive. Lea's (2007) description of the discourse of desire is relevant to the sexualisation of the initiator's behaviour. According to Lea (2007), the discourse of desire posits the physical attractiveness of the recipient as producing sexual interest in others, as making them desire him or her. In this extract, the discourse of desire operates to position the initiator's use of humour as about sex rather than about other possible functions of humour in the workplace such as fun, friendship and/or camaraderie (e.g. Pryor, 1995; Mott and Condor, 1997).

Whilst humour provides an opportunity for the initiator to 'do' unwanted sexual attention, it also is presented as a means to challenge this behaviour. Here, a third party intervenes in the interaction between the recipient and initiator through the use of wit. The retort of "a court case" brings in to sharp relief the formal working roles of those involved and functions to relocate the manager's behaviour from the realms of the informal to a formalised employment context in which inappropriate sexualised/gendered behaviour is legislated against. Similarly Alan, in his

discussion of workplace sexual discrimination, alludes to possible legal consequences of informal relationships and events in the employment context:

A: ... *I think um, it, it's important that, um, that sort of all parties are aware that certain situations could if not managed correctly, could if allowed to go out of control, could if not um managed with an air of moderation, for example, office parties just in this one aspect of*

L: *um*

A: *of ah sexual discrimination in the workplace could lead to scenarios like that being much more likely because the time, the circumstance, and attitudes and alcohol would, would sort of, maybe contribute to that. There is during three hundred and sixty four days in the year the boss would never think of making an approach on his young secretary.*

L: *um*

A: *Sort of the end of ah six seven hours drinking at a Christmas party, dancing around and having lots of fun, all of a sudden I think their inhibitions could, could drop ... maybe they do something that they would never normally conceive of if they were in normal circumstances*

In Alan's account, informal work-related events such as "office parties" can give rise to unprofessional behaviour. Unprofessionalism here is constituted through the use of the unruly personal relationships discourse in which informal behaviour is not subject to workplace regulation. Indeed, within this discourse, the personal realm and behaviours appeared to be relatively uncontrolled. This is emphasised through the use of a three part list where worker's behaviour might not be managed correctly", could "go out of control" and might not be managed with "an air of moderation". The potential for behaviour resulting in legal consequences is implied through use of legalistic, formal terminology such as "all parties", "sexual discrimination" and "managed correctly".

The initiator of potentially unruly behaviour is the “boss” and the recipient “his young secretary”. As mentioned earlier, the boss-secretary relationship has been represented as imbued with gendered hierarchical power imbalances. We saw early on in Alan’s interview that unwanted sexual attention directed by a boss towards a secretary constituted a clear -cut case in which the recipient is positioned as victim and the initiator as perpetrator. However, the gendered power differences between the recipient and initiator in this excerpt are constructed as complicated rather than clear-cut because of personalised, informal interactions between the two individuals. More specifically, through use of the unruly personal relationships discourse, unwanted sexual attention is located as a problem in the personal sphere when workers are not required to adhere to formal roles and regulations. This can be seen in the description of a boss “never” considering “making an approach on his young secretary” during “three hundred and sixty-four days in the year”. However, the informal social event of the “Christmas party” deregulates formal workplace behaviours. For example, workers are described as “drinking” which may allow their “inhibitions to drop” which creates the impression that employees are less concerned with controlling and managing their behaviour. The positioning of the boss’s behaviour as at least partially influenced by “drinking” locates his behaviour within a biological discourse in which alcohol may contribute to an individual dropping their inhibitions. It appears that “drinking” may mitigate the boss’s accountability for unwanted sexual attention because alcohol is constituted as partially responsible for making him behave in a manner that is out of character. Interestingly, unwanted sexual attention is described as stemming from “having lots of fun” which constitutes particular forms of personalised relations and behaviour as potentially dangerous.

The location of unwanted sexual attention in the realms of informal fun also serves to reduce the seriousness of it. The initiator is constructed as not intentionally using job-status to impose sexual attention on the secretary. Instead, the boss’s actions are constituted as a deviation from his normal behaviour – “he would never normally conceive of it”. His problematic behaviour is ascribed to circumstances in which he is expected to engage with colleagues informally,



where he is ‘allowed’ to have less control. Thus, it is informal situations rather than the boss himself which are constructed as the problem and because of this he is positioned as less blameable for his actions. Alan makes this point more explicitly in the excerpt below:

*A: ... How often that aspect of unwanted sexual attention happens, for example if it's a one off, if there's um sort of extenuating circumstances, not justifying um a, a sexual, ah, ah, um, any kind of sexual assault, but ah, if there was for example in this in this scenario of, ah workplace, scenario that maybe at a Christmas party or maybe it's equally unacceptable, it might be more explainable down to attitudes, atmosphere*

Whilst unwanted sexual attention is described as not justified, the use of a disclaimer here works to rationalise and excuse unwanted sexual attention. Unwanted sexual attention is constructed as understandable because of the informal context. It is informality rather than the initiator that is positioned as making unwanted sexual attention possible. The positioning of the boss's behaviour as a “one-off” further highlights it as an aberration produced by personalised relations. This functions to position the initiator as less blameable for his actions.

### **7.5 The Subjective as a Complication**

The notion that apportioning blame becomes difficult in personalised working relationships is further highlighted by constructions of subjective feelings and behaviour at work as complicating formal duties and relationships. For example, in the extract below, Pat alludes to the need for objectivity and rationality when considering an accusation of unwanted sexual attention in the workplace. However, an individual's ability for objective detachment is constructed as complicated by subjective feelings about colleagues they have a personal relationship with:

*P: If you're dealing with a friend, especially if they're the one supposedly harassing that's an impossible situation. I've been in a situation where someone's been accused, work colleague of sexual abuse, an that was a horrible, horrible time because he was a work colleague and, you know, worked with him a couple of years.*

*L: Yeah.*

*P: And suddenly someone's saying he was capable of something, I wouldn't dream he's capable of ... ah it was horrible. But to think that you, that someone you would trust um could do that, and someone that you've been out for a drink with an just, it's scary, but people are capable of these things*

Friendship in this context is constructed as complicating objective interpretation of this case of unwanted sexual attention. Pat describes herself as in a “horrible”, “impossible” situation because the positioning of the accused as perpetrator of “sexual abuse” is at odds with the positioning of the accused as a trusted friend. This can be seen in Pat’s comment that she “wouldn’t dream he’s capable of [sexual abuse]”. Here, dealing with a case of unwanted sexual attention is not just a matter of assessing evidence but also emotional work in the sense that it involves reassessing subjective judgements about her friendship with the accused. Implied in this account is that formal accusations may work to end informal relations. This can be seen in Pat’s description of “people” being “capable of these things”. The use of the generic word “people” serves to create relational and emotional distance between Pat and the accused. Particular forms of emotionality were also constituted in Eve’s account as producing particular interpersonal difficulties in formalised relations. This can be seen in the extract below:

*E: ... I mean it happens, I mean if you've got, you know, the way some women are really huggy.*

*L: Yeah.*

*E: Now, if that, if you've got, if you work say in an office with*

*somebody, and it's a small office and one person hugs everybody, all the time, you meet people like that don't you*

*L: yeah*

*E: and if there's somebody in the office who hates it and they just think don't, don't touch me, I don't want you to hug me, I don't like it, is that then sexual harassment?*

Here, the sense of personalisation of working relationships is accomplished through the description of “a small office” which creates the impression of physical closeness and familiarity amongst colleagues. This personalisation of formal roles is expressed through hugging which is constructed as a feminine characteristic as can be seen in the claim that “some women” rather than men “are really huggy”. Here, the “huggy” woman worker is constructed through the use of liberal humanist notions of personalised work environments in which workers are not only understood in terms of labour but rather as individuals whose feelings should be valued. There is a sense here that the woman worker is simply expressing who she is which is reflected in the comment that “some women *are* really huggy”.

Hugging is associated with intimacy, support and caring, all of which are dominantly represented as a feminine preserve. The performance of this behaviour in the workplace can be read as a form of emotional labour in which such caring acts are used to “create an atmosphere of contentment” (Hochschild, 1983). Through this description of emotional labour, the “small office” becomes constituted as femininised.

The association of hugging with caring and supportive behaviours constitutes it as ‘nice’ as well as desexualising the act. The non-offensiveness of the act can be seen further in the positioning of workers – only one person “hates it” – which implies that the majority of workers are accepting of it. This construction of majority acceptance constitutes unwanted behaviour as a personal preference which locates dislike of the behaviour firmly with the realms of the subjective –

there is no objective or rationalised reason given here for why the recipient “hates it” – their dislike of it is constituted as just the way they feel about it. The construction of unwanted behaviour as personal preference, a subjective feeling of dislike, works to throw doubt on the recipient’s position as victim for as Eve asks “is that then sexual harassment?”.

The depiction of unwanted behaviour as a generally acceptable behaviour in Eve’s account further undermines the positioning of the recipient as victim as well as the positioning of the initiator as a perpetrator of sexual harassment. Interestingly, what Eve’s example highlights is the risks of doing emotional labour, informal relations and subjective engagement in the workplace. This particular example draws attention to the ways in which personalised working relations opens up possibilities for subjective interpretations and personal preferences within the workplace which may complicate formal working relations. The ways in which subjective interpretations and feelings in the workplace produce particular interpersonal difficulties with colleagues can be seen further in Steve’s account below. More specifically, Steve describes how subjective engagement with colleagues can give rise to misinterpretation:

*L: Are there any kinds of unwanted sexual attention that er, that are more serious than others?*

*S: Um yes, yeah, I would say so, yes, obviously er touching somebody as they go past or something like that. Sometimes it’s accidental it can happen though.*

*L: Yeah.*

*S: And sometimes, it’s just sort of playful, is obviously, or can be misconstrued, some people think differently. I suppose everybody will flirt to a certain extent, but it’s really, it depends how the individual that’s being flirted at sees the thing.*

*L: Yeah*

*S: xxx*

*L: Do you think misconstruing the situation is a common thing or?*

*S: Um, I think it happens sometimes, everybody's having a laugh and you know it's ok, and suppose suddenly, probably going back too far. I mean can, how do you know how far you can cope with it? Suppose really from a bloke's point of view um, you're there you do the job but you try an have a laugh at the same time*

*L: yeah*

Working life is constructed as involving both doing 'the job' in the formal sense of performing roles, duties and responsibilities as well as more personalised informal interaction with colleagues such as having "a laugh". The use of the disclaimer – "you're there to do a job *but* you try to have a laugh at the same time" – draws attention to the ways in which informal relations are intertwined with formal roles in employment.

This more personalised interaction is constructed as having fun which is reflected by words such as "playful", "flirt" and "have a laugh". Interestingly, having a "laugh" at work is constituted as important from "a bloke's point of view". Arguably, this could be read as a means through which men do emotional labour in the workplace. As mentioned above, the increased emphasis on feelings, emotional support and valuing the individual in the workplace has produced the need for emotional labour to be performed by workers and this has traditionally been seen as a feminine preserve (e.g. Ball, 2004). However, the prioritisation of particular forms of emotional work on the job has been interwoven with masculinised organisations and/or masculinised identity in various ways. For example, McDowell (2001), argues that men often do emotions in the workplace through informal strategies such as humour. This can be seen in this account, where Steve describes men workers engaging in personalised interactions through humour and "having a laugh".

However, there is a sense that this form of emotional labour and personal engagement are potentially fraught with risk because it involves engaging with the subjective. More specifically, subjective interpretation of the behaviour and events of others from moment to moment is constructed as unknowable. This is because during interaction sometimes “everyone’s having a laugh” and “it’s ok” and then “suddenly” particular behaviours might be interpreted as going “too far”. In Steve’s account, the initiator of interaction is constructed as in a risky position because possibilities for misconstrual are constituted as unpredictable.

In Steve’s account, unwanted sexual attention is constructed as “playful” and “flirting” which locates such behaviour in the realms of ‘normal’ interpersonal relations as well as rendering it harmless. It is framed as a misunderstanding which further constitutes it as part of normal, harmless interaction. Within this construction of unwanted sexual attention, the initiator is positioned as a normal ‘bloke’ rather than a perpetrator of a sexual offence. This is accomplished by the description of unwanted sexual attention as “accidental” or a misconstrual. Here, intention to do harm is absent which serves to position the initiator as less blameable than someone who intends to offend. There is also the sense that the initiator is less responsible for offence caused because, as mentioned above, other people’s reactions to an individual’s behaviour are difficult to foresee. In this account, the recipient could be read as being over-sensitive because the behaviour is constituted as fun, friendly and about “having a laugh”.

The construction of unwanted sexual attention as a misunderstanding during otherwise friendly interaction works to undermine the possibility of the recipient as being a victim and the initiator as a perpetrator of wrongdoing. Instead, by constituting unwanted sexual attention as an accident, as an ever-present risk associated with friendly interaction, it becomes normalised.

The construction of personalised relationships as risky can be seen further in Steve’s account when he describes informal interactions with his colleagues during work nights out. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

*L: When you say wrong signals what do you mean?*

*S: Um, yeah, accidental, totally accidental. Sometimes you can just you can say something and some, somebody totally misconstrues it...in what I do it can happen. Just were out with, we're out with work, an having a laugh you say something to somebody, and one person can take it quite innocently, and the other person, you know, hands you their phone number*

Here, engaging in friendly, informal relationships with colleagues is constituted as risky because friendly behaviour can be misunderstood by some individuals as an offer of further intimacy. The possibility of misinterpretation is constituted as a potential problem in interaction because “one person can take it quite innocently and the other person you know hands you their phone number”. Therefore, because interpretation of behaviour is constructed as varying between individuals, misunderstandings are constituted as difficult to foresee. Given that misunderstandings are hard to predict, individuals located in this interaction are positioned as less blameable because consequences of behaviour are “accidental”. Thus, constituting unwanted sexual attention as a misunderstanding, unwanted sexualised behaviour becomes understandable. This functions to normalise unwanted sexual attention in this context.

## **7.6 Public/Private & Risk**

The public/private distinction has been drawn on in both academic and popular accounts of sexual violence to construct victimisation as a risk of participating in public life. For example, ‘stranger danger’ has been located as a problem within the public sphere. In contrast, environments and relationships which have been constructed as private such as the home, family, partners and friends have been dominantly represented as ‘safe’ (e.g. Harden, 2000). The representations of public as dangerous and private as safe have been challenged by the recognition of other forms of sexual violence occurring in intimate and personal relationships.

In some participant accounts, notions of the public/private dichotomy were interwoven with what I will call the '(in)escapable discourse' in which notions of risk are constructed in relation to the ease with which a recipient can disentangle themselves from problematic situations. Notions of unwanted sexual attention as a danger or threat to the recipient in public places was mitigated by constructions of it as easily escaped from. This can be seen in Philip's account where he discusses how recipients can negotiate situations involving unwanted sexual attention. In the following extract, Philip describes the ways in which recipients can handle unwanted sexual attention in particular public spaces:

*P: If it was in a pub or a club I mean again the, ah, the recipient has always got, ah, the voting rights with their feet*

*L: um*

*P: you know, if they don't want it, then they can you know move, walk away, leave the club, leave pub, go elsewhere. If an individual follows and makes it, you know, ah continues with it then again, the recipient could always report it to, you know, someone in a pub or a club, a bouncer, a manager or whatever and ask them to ask the other individual to leave or if it was a bloke he could punch him on the nose [laugh]*

Here, there is a sense that dealing with unwanted sexual attention in particular public spaces such as "a pub or a club" is relatively straightforward because it is reasonably easy for the recipient to escape from the situation – "if they don't want it, then they can you know move away, walk away, leave". Notions of potential danger or threat associated with further manifestations of unwanted sexual attention is mitigated by reference to reporting and protection mechanisms that are in place in pubs and clubs. Indeed, the idea of expressions of unwanted sexual attention in public places as dangerous or risky for the recipient is further undermined by the implicit suggestion that in some instances sexual attention might be wanted in this context. This can be seen in the use of the word "if" in the sentence "if they don't want it". The construction of pubs and clubs as a space



where sexual attention might occur, that expressions of it might be welcomed and that unwanted manifestations of it are easily dealt with works to normalise as well as trivialise recipient experiences.

A gendered distinction is made around the strategies recipients can use to communicate non-consent. Whilst not mentioned explicitly at the beginning of the excerpt, Philip begins by discussing women recipients. The distinction made between women and men recipients is made clear towards the end where he overtly describes a strategy for dealing with unwanted sexual attention used by “blokes”. Women recipients are positioned as having indirect strategies at their disposal to communicate non-consent. This construction of the strategies used by women to challenge unwanted conduct resonates with issues discussed in Chapter 2 around communicating non-consent. We saw that in response to arguments that recipients, women in particular, may be reluctant and/or unable to refuse unwanted sexual attention directly, indirect strategies for communication of non-consent such as leaving the room have been argued to be a sufficient indication that behaviour was unwelcome in legal contexts (e.g. Monti, 2000). As argued in previous chapters, the requirement (within both legal and popular discourses) that women recipients use either direct or indirect strategies to communicate non-consent works to re-inscribe gendered positionings within predominant constructions of sexual refusal in which women become accountable for managing men’s sexual behaviour (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2).

In Philip’s account, gendered notions around confrontation and aggression are drawn on to position women as non-confrontational, non-aggressive and in need of help to challenge manifestations of unwanted sexual attention (see also Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). This portrayal of women works to locate them as vulnerable and in need to protection. This sense of feminised vulnerability is further highlighted by the description of those designated to protect recipients’ in particular public places. For example, the “bouncer” is a highly masculinised position which becomes imbued with heterosexualised, masculinist notions of physicality, aggression and guarding of territory (Wolkowitz, 2006). Reference to the

“bouncer” in this excerpt brings into sharp relief the dependency of the feminised other for protection on those located as masculinised. In contrast, male recipients need no such protection. The description of the male recipient as being able to deal with unwanted sexual attention through violence (re)produces versions of hegemonic masculinity as aggressive and as a perpetrator of violence rather than a victim of it. Indeed, Philip’s laughter after the description of men’s violence can be read as an indication of the difficulty he has in taking unwanted sexual attention between men seriously which again serves to undermine the male recipient as a victim of unwanted sexual attention.

In a similar vein to Phillip, the (in)escapable discourse was drawn on in Kate’s interview to make sense of the difficulties associated with negotiating unwanted sexual attention in public places. However, in Kate’s account this discourse was also drawn on to make distinctions between issues raised when dealing with unwanted conduct in both public and private spheres. This can be seen in the excerpt below which follows on from an earlier discussion in the interview where Kate had described “pubs and clubs” as public “environments” where unwanted sexual attention might be encountered.

*K: Unwanted sexual advances from a stranger, er, in an environment where a person might feel vulnerable, they’re the worst one’s that I can think of because you’ve, it can become a physical um fear from the advance. But I would say that’s the easiest to get over, because people can either report it or they can move away from the situation, and leave that behind and the episode is over and done with.*

*L: Where is that?*

*K: That’s in a, say an environment where you out and about, where you’re encountering a stranger who making advance to you.*

*L: Ah right, yeah.*

*K: Where you can walk away, you’re not gonna encounter them*

*again. But I would say from a personal point of view, it's probably worse in a situation where it's developed from someone that you know, has developed either a crush ... um and you can't walk away from it, you have to deal with, and that's where it becomes difficult because everything hangs on how you deal with them. They've put their cards on the table, so if your job's on the line or quite often, if people reject someone who's a friend, it can complicate social circles ... social politics very nasty thing. So I would say that was the worst circumstance, when you can't walk away from the person and leave that behind as part of your life*

Kate begins this discussion of the public/private distinction by framing particular public spaces as potentially risky. It is in these public environments that individuals “might feel vulnerable” because they are exposed to the unknown. More specifically, the unknown ‘stranger’ is constituted as a risk because of the possibility of a sexual advance escalating into a “physical” attack. Whilst the threat of sexual victimisation in particular public spheres is constituted as the “worst one”, it is also described as the “easiest one to get over”. This is because the recipient is positioned as able to escape from the intricacies involved in dealing with it to some degree because they can hand over this responsibility to the police by reporting it. It is also an escapable situation because the recipient can “move away from the situation and leave that behind”.

In contrast, unwanted sexual attention in personal relationships – “from someone you know”, from a “friend” is problematic because it is inescapable; “you can't walk away from it you have to deal with it”. Dealing with unwanted sexual attention in personalised relationships is constituted as a risky process requiring emotional labour. More specifically, the recipient must negotiate their rejection of unwanted sexual attention in relation to the initiator's feelings. Here, the initiator is constructed as emotionally vulnerable because they've “put their cards on the table” and in doing so risk being hurt by rejection. The rejected initiator is also

positioned as a risk to the recipient in that they may return the hurt in some way as is implied by the example of the recipient's job being "on the line". The risk associated with rejecting someone is not only constructed as a localised problem between recipient and initiator but as something that could impact other relationships within a social network. Thus, the recipient not only has to negotiate the initiator's feelings of rejection but also "social politics" which are positioned as risky because potentially this can be a "very nasty thing". The ways in which risk is constructed within the (in)escapable discourse can be seen further in the following extract:

*K: In the short term, when you encounter it, when you're out and about, say in pubs or clubs, it can be worse because it's more immediately threatening ... but the most complicated is when you get it from people who have originally started as friends*

*L: yeah*

*K: and you find that things change between them, and then you've got to deal with explaining to them how you feel about it without hurting their feelings because you genuinely feel sorry for them, you like them*

*L: yeah*

*K: um but without encouraging them and that's the one that personally, I find hardest to deal with. Not that I'm suggesting that it happens to me all the time but every now and again it does and that's the one I really struggle with. You can't laugh and joke about it, brush it off cos it keeps reoccurring and reoccurring the next time you have a decent bottle of red wine I usually find*

Again, public places of "pubs or clubs" are constructed as spaces in which individuals are vulnerable to sexual threat. However, this particular risk is constituted as escapable through the description of it as "short term". In contrast, unwanted sexual attention in close, personal relationships is inescapable because

opportunities for “reoccurrence” present themselves. Here, situations in which unwanted sexual attention may reoccur are those which involve drinking alcohol. It is implied that, generally, in the absence of alcohol consumption, the initiator refrains from making sexualised advances. However, the link made between manifestations of unwanted conduct and alcohol consumption serves to locate the initiators behaviour within a biological discourse in which alcohol may contribute to an individual losing their inhibitions and acting on their feelings rather than monitoring the impact of their behaviour on others. The implication of the operation of this biological discourse in this excerpt is that drinking may contribute to the expression of unwanted sexual attention which may work to mitigate the initiator’s accountability for unwanted conduct.

Unwanted sexual attention in friendships is also described here as “the most complicated” because it involves negotiating a number of interpersonal risks. The recipient is located in a care discourse in which they must attempt to manage the communication of rejection “without hurting [the initiator’s] feelings”. There is a sense that this communication is risky for the recipient of the sexual attention in that they are required to be ‘nice’ but not so ‘nice’ that they inadvertently encourage further unwanted sexual attention. The positionings of both victim and perpetrator of unwanted sexual attention become less clear-cut in this construction. The positioning of the initiator as a perpetrator becomes undermined and complicated by the constitution of them as unrequited lover and vulnerable to emotional hurt from the recipient. Similarly there is not a clear sense of the recipient as a victim of unwanted sexual attention because of their positioning as someone who can hurt the initiator. Instead, unwanted sexual attention becomes constituted as a difficult but nonetheless ‘normal’ aspect of managing unrequited love.

In addition to rejection, other possible social and emotional costs were highlighted as a risk of the process of making sexual interests known to others. In the excerpt below, Kate describes risks associated with making a sexual advance in the context of social networks:

*K: If it's in that contained, um, environment, not just work thinking about it, everybody assumes it takes place at work, the hockey club, if it wasn't dealt with the way it is within there, then you might find there are people who feel uncomfortable. It's not a game, it's a game and after the day, and then nights out and trips away, it's a whole piece of someone's social life that they would be excluded from if they dealt with it poorly ... it's almost as if you want them to say well, yes, if you could love me that would be nice, but just don't make it difficult or awkward for me*

Again, the initiator is constructed as vulnerable. However, the initiator is vulnerable not only in the sense that he/she is open to emotional upset but also to social exclusion and loss. This sense of loss is emphasised by use of the three part list “after the day, and then nights and trips away” and the use of an extreme case formulation – “it’s a *whole* piece of someone’s social life”. Taken together, these descriptions work to emphasize the impact of social exclusion and in doing so highlight the risk of making sexual advances. A romantic discourse is drawn on to construct the initiator as someone who wants love to be returned. The location of the initiator in a romantic discourse serves to construct social exclusion as unfair and unpleasant which positions the initiator as a victim.

The location of unwanted sexual attention in a romantic discourse serves to desexualise the sexual advance by constituting it as about love which has connotations of affection and relational commitment rather than sex. This construction of it works to undermine the positioning of the recipient as a victim of it because the behaviour is constituted as desexualised through notions of romance and love. Indeed, being loved is generally represented as desirable/pleasant which further undermines the recipient’s position as victim. Instead, the recipient is positioned as having power to “make things difficult or awkward” for the initiator. The recipient’s power to make things difficult for the

initiator implies that they play a key role in social exclusion which serves to position the recipient as a perpetrator of relational misdemeanour.

### **7.7     *Summary***

In the constructions identified, sexual harassment is variously constituted as a permissible problem in personal relationships. It is permissible in the sense that sexualised behaviours are represented as ‘allowable’ in personal relationships. However, it was simultaneously problematised in and outside the workplace context. In personalised versions of the workplace, unwanted sexual attention is constructed as creating tensions between the management of personal relationships and management of professional conduct within this formalised context. Outside the workplace, unwanted sexual attention in personal relationships is problematised through the ways in which it requires the recipient to negotiate the initiators feelings of rejection. This positions the recipient in various ways as accountable for the initiators emotional well-being. This issue of recipient accountability is constructed as complicating the process of dealing with unwanted sexual attention in personal relationships.

In the next chapter, the question of how sexual harassment can be dealt with is explored further through an analysis of narratives on this particular issue.

## **Chapter 8: Policies & Practices: Stories of Victimisation**

### **8.1     *Introduction***

In this chapter, I will interpret narratives focused on sexual harassment policy which were identified in the second Q methodological study conducted. This study is contextualised by concerns about the ways in which both policy and public practices more generally subject those who report sexual harassment to further victimisation. This chapter will begin by discussing the ways in which a range of legal and policy processes maintain the conditions under which secondary victimisation is made possible. The discussion will then move on to the interpretation of each narrative identified through Q analysis described in chapter 5. Lastly, I will focus on the variable ways in which issues of sympathetic victim treatment and false allegations become relevant to the narratives identified. In doing so, I seek to unpack the implications they have in relation to secondary victimisation.

### **8.2     *Secondary Victimisation***

As discussed in chapter two, sexual violence in general, and sexual harassment in particular, have often been minimised or trivialised in social/political discourses. For example, sexual harassment has been depicted as ‘just sex’, a result of misunderstandings, or secondary to organisational values, interests and aims in the context of the workplace harassment (Morgen, 2001; Van Dijk, 1997). In the workplace, victims who complain are variously represented as troublemakers, difficult to work with and not team players (Morgen, 2001). In common with other forms of gendered/sexual violence, victims (particularly women) of sexual harassment are often blamed for their experiences by positioning them as responsible for it in some way (Vanderveen, 2006; Cowan, 2000; see also chapter two).

Despite the positioning of sexual/gendered violence as illegal, the ways in which victim-blaming discourses and/or trivialisation of such acts become interwoven with police, court and organisational responses to cases has been well-documented. For example, particular police practices became subject to scrutiny



during the 1990s. Of particular concern was the use of the no - criming procedure used in relation to reports of sexual/gendered violence. More specifically, reports that the police services deemed “hopeless and had no intention of investigating further” were recorded as ‘no crime’, that is, no crime had been committed (Gregory and Lees, 1999, P 60; Johnson, Ollus and Nevala, 2007). This served to create the impression that a high proportion of complaints were false (Gregory and Lees, 1999). In addition to this, during the 1990s police treatment of sexual/gendered violence victims received criticism on the basis of victim-insensitive interrogation strategies used during investigations.

As a response to such criticisms, police policy was radically altered to offer a more victim-orientated approach. This approach included specialist training for officers handling such cases and the introduction of the chaperone system in which specially trained police officers would act as chaperones to ensure fair treatment of the victim during the process. However, despite these changes, Anderson and Doherty (2008) notes that it is still the case that a high number of victims still receive unsympathetic and/or negative responses from the police.

As with police responses, court processes appear to be generally unsympathetic to victims of sexualised/gendered violence. According to Raitt and Zeedyk (2000), many victims, particularly women, are subject to secondary victimisation by the judicial process. Central to this judicial victimisation is the way the examination of the victim witness is carried out which tends to focus on problematising the victim by, for example, using evidence of promiscuity to undermine claims of sexual violence. As noted by scholars in the field, the ‘promiscuity’ defence is highly gendered which works through positioning women victims as active sexual beings which runs counter to normative notions of feminine sexualities in which the woman is located as passive object (e.g. Anderson and Doherty, 2008; Gavey, 2005; Gregory and Lees, 1999).

Although ‘shield laws’ have been introduced to prevent the complainants’ past sexual history being used as ‘evidence’ in cases, it appears that these laws “have

been less than effective because they are rarely applied in practice” (Anderson and Doherty, 2008: 19). In relation to workplace sexual harassment, current definitions focus on whether behaviour was wanted, welcomed or not. This phrasing invites questions about the recipients past sexual history, not only with the accused but also potentially with other co-workers (e.g. Ford, Notestine and Hill, 2000).

Unsurprisingly, negative representations and treatment of victims of sexual/gendered violence within judicial, organisational and public discourses of sexual/gendered violence have been represented as a significant barrier to reporting cases to authorities (Anderson and Doherty, 2008; Morgen, 2001, Gregory and Lees, 1999, Van Dijk, 1997). Barriers to reporting sexual harassment have focused largely on examining negative work-related consequences such as being labelled as ‘trouble maker’. However, the introduction of the 1997 Protection from Harassment Act brings with it a different set of considerations concerning treatment of sexual harassment victims by police services and court processes which has to date received little attention in the literature. Given predominant concerns within the literature around the trivialisation of the issue of sexual harassment more generally, it would seem pertinent to examine social understandings of these current policies and legal initiatives.

To explore the ways in which various issues concerning recipients and initiators become relevant to understandings of policy initiatives and practices in and outside the workplace, I conducted a Q methodological study which aimed to tap into and map narratives concerning sexual harassment policy, which have currency in this cultural context (see also Chapter 5).

### **8.3    *Analysis of Narratives***

In this study, 10 factors were identified. In the following section a brief description of the participants who loaded on a given factor is provided prior to the reading of the factor as a narrative. The reading of narratives is informed by participant comments which contextualised the positioning of particular

statements in completed Q sorts which were merged to produce the exemplifying Q sort for each factor.

#### **8.4 Factor 1: The Impact Narrative**

Factor 1 explains 44.823% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 20.170. Two men (Participants 36 and 27) and three women (Participants 43, 45 and 4) loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 36 described himself as a 19 year old job seeker and participant 27 was a 57 year old lecturer. Participants 43 and 45 were undergraduate students in their early 20s and participant 4 was a 26 year old office worker. Participant 4 also had taken part in the first Q study (see chapter 6) and had loaded significantly on Factor 4 – the Boundaries narrative.

##### *Interpretation*

In the Impact narrative, the claim that sexual harassment is a minor issue and that complaints of it should be taken with a pinch of salt is considered “a load of rubbish [as] it can affect the person’s well being and other aspects of their life” (P36 comments for 18: -4; 54: -5) and so “for some people it might be a very major issue (P45 comments for 54: -5). Given this, investigating complaints of sexual harassment cannot be considered a misuse of police time nor can it be claimed that laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary (30: -3). Indeed, it is the impact that sexual harassment can have on victims which makes protection against it crucial, particularly in the workplace (26: -3).

It is concern about the impact that sexual harassment can have on people’s lives which is of primary importance in this narrative. The impact of sexual harassment is not something that victims should learn to deal with by themselves as “they may need counselling as if the harassment is bad they may need to talk about it” (P4 comments for 25: -3). Therefore it is important that recipients of sexual harassment receive practical help to deal with this experience (16: +3).

Concern with the emotional impact of sexual harassment on the victim is further reflected in the prioritisation of practices which create a supportive and protective

climate to facilitate victim disclosure, complaint making and amelioration. For example, police treatment of the victim requires sensitivity and questioning should occur in a non-threatening environment because “the recipient may be embarrassed by what has happened to them” (P4 comments for 45: +4; 52: +4). In addition to this, recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case as “they will be more comfortable talking about intimate details” (P 4 comments for 47: +3). Victim –blaming strategies such as those which focus on the victim’s past sexual behaviour have no place in sexual harassment investigations as this “shouldn’t be an issue, it doesn’t mean you can be sexually harassed” (P43 comments for 38: -5).

However, the need to foster a sensitive approach to the treatment of victims is not specific to agency processes. Rather people in general should be sympathetic to individuals who claim they have been sexually harassed (28: +3). Indeed, in this narrative, it appears that there is a need for collective action to be taken against sexual harassment. The onus is not just on the recipient to tell the initiator to stop or complain, the victim’s partner, friends or other witnesses have a duty to intervene or report sexual harassment (20: +3; 43: +2; 50: +2; 56: +2).

It is acknowledged that complaint making can be risky with the victim becoming the subject of repercussions. It is emphasised that the recipient should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment as “no-one should be victimised in any circumstances” (P45 comments for 19: +5). For this reason, it is of utmost importance for the victim to not only be protected from retaliation from the accused but also from negative comments in general about their actions (19: +5; 15: +4). This is because “negative comments could be very hurtful and the recipient may feel as though they should withdraw the complaint even if what they say happened to them did” (P4 comments for 15: +4). As a preventative strategy against retaliation, it is necessary for victims to remain anonymous (31: -4).

However, in this narrative, it is also important to be mindful that not all complaints of sexual harassment are true. A complaint of sexual harassment is a “serious and damaging allegation to make about someone so if it is false you should be liable for some punishment” (P43 comments for 33: +3). Since false claims can have a “serious and damaging” impact on those accused, the identity of alleged initiators should be kept secret (P43 comments for 33:+3: 40: +2). The acknowledgement of false complaints does not render the recipient’s word as insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued (55: -4). The importance of this issue, the impact that sexual harassment can have on victims means that all complaints should “always be pursued” (P4 comments for 55: -4) and “investigated at least” (P27 comments for 55: -4).

The wider impact of particular strategies for dealing with sexual harassment is also considered in this narrative. For example, concerns with prison overcrowding become relevant to considerations on how to deal with those found guilty of sexual harassment. More specifically, prison sentences are not a good way to deal with it as “there are too many people in prison already” (P27 comments for 14: -3). Therefore, injunctions are prioritised as here seems to be on creating ‘safe’ distance between the initiator and recipient and as such if harassment occurs in the workplace, the initiator should be sacked (29: +2).

### *Factor 1: The Impact Narrative*

				<div>36 A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked</div> <div>39 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police</div>							
				<div>10 It should not be the government's responsibility to provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment</div>	<div>11 The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment</div>	<div>60 The government should provide instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint</div>					
				<div>7 Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment</div>	<div>49 Sexual harassment that happens in the home is better dealt with privately</div>	<div>24 Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment</div>	<div>59 Sexual harassment in public places should be dealt with by the police</div>	<div>40 The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret</div>			
				<div>46 There is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home</div>	<div>5 The courts should not be responsible for providing protection for recipients of sexual harassment</div>	<div>6 The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment</div>	<div>9 There should be specialist organisations that provide support to those who have been sexually harassed</div>	<div>2 Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment</div>			
				<div>30 Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time</div>	<div>42 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers</div>	<div>32 Sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police</div>	<div>1 I feel that making sexual harassment a criminal offence is taking things too far</div>	<div>51 Occurrences of sexual harassment in the home should be reported</div>	<div>12 Everyone should be made aware of how they can make a sexual harassment complaint</div>	<div>33 A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished</div>	
				<div>23 Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary</div>	<div>27 The courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment</div>	<div>8 It is unfair to deny promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment</div>	<div>21 Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment</div>	<div>48 People that witness sexual harassment should report it</div>	<div>56 Sexual harassment that happens in public places should be reported</div>	<div>16 Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support</div>	
<div>55 The recipient's word is insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued</div>				<div>25 People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves</div>	<div>4 The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion</div>	<div>22 It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred</div>	<div>13 I feel that providing everyone with training on how to deal with sexual harassment is unnecessary</div>	<div>57 People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment</div>	<div>43 One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassed</div>	<div>47 Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case</div>	<div>52 The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment</div>
<div>54 Sexual harassment is a minor issue</div>	<div>31 The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be revealed</div>	<div>26 There is no need for protection against sexual harassment in the workplace</div>	<div>37 Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation</div>	<div>44 There is no need to provide the police with specific training for dealing with sexual harassment cases</div>	<div>35 All complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities</div>	<div>34 A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counselling</div>	<div>50 One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed</div>	<div>20 The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop</div>	<div>15 People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions</div>	<div>19 Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused</div>	
<div>38 The police should take in to account the recipient's past sexual behaviour</div>	<div>18 Sexual harassment complaints should be taken with a grain of salt</div>	<div>14 Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment</div>	<div>58 Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time</div>	<div>17 Employers should be held legally responsible for workplace sexual harassment whether they knew about or not</div>	<div>41 There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places</div>	<div>3 A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested</div>	<div>29 An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked</div>	<div>28 People should be sympathetic to individuals who claim that they have been sexually harassed</div>	<div>45 The police should question recipients of sexual harassment in a sensitive manner</div>	<div>53 Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment</div>	
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	

**Most Disagree**

Most Agree

### **8.5     *Factor 2: The ‘Proper’ Process Narrative***

This factor explains 7.266 of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 3.270. Four women in their early 20s and one 26 year old man loaded significantly on this factor. Three of the women were students (participant 39, 8 and 12) and one woman was a job seeker (participant 9). The male participant worked in sales (participant 7).

#### *Interpretation*

Like the Impact narrative, the ‘Proper’ Process narrative positions claims that sexual harassment is a minor issue and that complaints should be taken with a pinch of salt as “ridiculous” (P8 comments for 54: -5 & 18: -3). To sensibly tackle the problem of sexual harassment, this narrative implies that we must move away from such claims and instead raise public awareness of the processes involved in making a complaint and provide training on how to deal with such experiences (12: +3; 13: -4).

The victim is fore-grounded in this narrative as someone who deserves people’s sympathy and needs support when dealing with sexual harassment (28: +3; 25: -4)). What is emphasised in victim treatment is not only sympathetic agency treatment (52: +3) but also making sure that victims get the ‘right’ or ‘proper’ support in the form of specialist help (9: +4). Doing the ‘right’ thing is not confined to providing emotional support for the victim but also making sure that complaints are pursued and investigated properly. To do this it is necessary to make sure recipients receive practical support (16: +4). For example, the provision of victim protection against retaliation by the accused is not solely because “someone has done something wrong to the victim (P12 comments for 19: +5) but also negative repercussions might “stop the recipient from complaining” (P8 comments for 19: +5; 31: -5). Therefore, practical considerations around addressing the problem of sexual harassment become interwoven with concerns about the emotional impact of such behaviour on the victim.

This is not to say that victim complaints are taken at face-value. To make sure that investigations are fair and follow due process it is necessary that a person’s reasons for complaining about sexual harassment are checked as there “may be ulterior motives” for lodging this kind of grievance (P7 comments for 36: +3). Once guilt has been determined,

legal deterrence is required which may involve court processes, prison sentences and/or sacking employees found guilty of sexual harassment (5: -3; 23: -2; 14: +4; 29: +3). A punitive stance is taken up in relation to perpetrators who continue to break sexual harassment laws. For example, a perpetrator who breaches an injunction should be arrested because “a person who is guilty of a crime and commits the crime again should be punished according to the law” (P7 comments for 3: +5). In this case, the perpetrator is “obsessed and can’t stop [and so] needs to be locked away” (P8 comments for 3: +5). Therefore, deterrence in the form of punishment and physical removal of perpetrators who fail to respond to such deterrents is what is needed to stop sexual harassment.

The main problem with efforts to challenge sexual harassment lies in poor police practices. Currently, while sexual harassment is a police matter, people are not adequately protected by this service (32: +2; 39: -3). If it were “the case” that people were adequately protected by the police “it would not occur” (P8 comments for 39: -3) because the police have the power to stop such behaviour (6: -3). As mentioned above, it is not the case that sexual harassment is a minor issue and that dealing with such complaints is a misuse of police time (54: -5; 30: -3). Instead, it seems that the police have got their priorities wrong, for example “waiting by the road for hours to get speeders is a waste” (P7 comments for 30: -3). Therefore a restructuring of police priorities is what is needed to stop incidents of sexual harassment.



### *Factor 2: The ‘Proper’ Processes Narrative*

						20 The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop				
						33 A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished				
				42 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers		7 Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment	35 All complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities			
			1 I feel that making sexual harassment a criminal offence is taking things too far	21 Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	34 A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counselling	50 One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed	15 People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions			
			23 Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary	46 There is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home	38 The police should take in to account the recipient's past sexual behaviour	48 People that witness sexual harassment should report it	49 Sexual harassment that happens in the home is better dealt with privately			
		30 Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time	4 The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion	58 Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time	22 It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred	37 Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation	56 Sexual harassment that happens in public places should be reported	28 People should be sympathetic to individuals who claim that they have been sexually harassed		
		5 The courts should not be responsible for providing protection for recipients of sexual harassment	8 It is unfair to deny promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment	11 The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment	2 Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	47 Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case	59 Sexual harassment in public places should be dealt with by the police	29 An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked		
	13 I feel that providing everyone with training on how to deal with sexual harassment is unnecessary	6 The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment	40 The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret	57 People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment	41 There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places	53 Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment	32 Sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police	52 The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment	14 Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment	
31 The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be revealed	25 People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves	18 Sexual harassment complaints should be taken with a grain of salt	10 It should not be the government's responsibility to provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment	27 The courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment	24 Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment	51 Occurrences of sexual harassment in the home should be reported	45 The police should question recipients of sexual harassment in a sensitive manner	12 Everyone should be made aware of how they can make a sexual harassment complaint	9 There should be specialist organisations that provide support to those who have been sexually harassed	19 Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused
54 Sexual harassment is a minor issue	44 There is no need to provide the police with specific training for dealing with sexual harassment cases	39 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police	26 There is no need for protection against sexual harassment in the workplace	17 Employers should be held legally responsible for workplace sexual harassment whether they knew about or not	55 The recipient's word is insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued	60 The government should provide instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint	43 One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassed	36 A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked	16 Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support	3 A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

**Most Disagree**

**Most Agree**

### **8.6 Factor 3: The Accountability Narrative**

This factor explains 4.688 of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 2.109. Two women loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 21 was 19 years old and Participant 10 was in her 40s.

#### *Interpretation*

In this narrative, sexual harassment is not considered to be a minor issue because “it could lead to more serious matters” (P10 comments for 54: -4) which implies that it may act as a precursor to more extreme problematic behaviour. Therefore the criminalisation of sexual harassment is entirely appropriate regardless of the circumstances or contexts in which it occurs (1: -3; 23: -3; 59: +3; 49: -4). Given the potential seriousness of sexual harassment, complaints should not be trivialised or ignored because “whatever the reason [for the complaint] they should always be checked out, where there’s smoke there’s fire” (P21 comments for 18: -5; 35: +3).

The basis for the complaint, the “fire” as it were, needs to be investigated by the proper authorities such as the police as they have the power to do something about it (35: +3; 32: +4; 6: -4). More specifically, it is recognised that grievances are not always genuine so there is a need to check a person’s motives for complaining about sexual harassment – “questions should be asked as it can often be untrue” (P21 comments for 36: +4). “Lies can have a serious effect on people. A lie like that can ruin someone’s life” (P21 comments for 33: +4) so there is a need to punish people who deliberately make a false complaint (33: +4). The possibility of false complaints should not, however, cloud the investigative procedure. The complainant should be treated as “innocent until proven guilty” (P21 comments for 52: +2) and so should be questioned by police in a non-threatening environment and their rights to anonymity upheld (31: -3). Steps need to be put in place to ensure that the victim’s version of events is untainted by, for example, retaliatory actions from the alleged perpetrator as “the accused should not be allowed to interfere or apply pressure to the victim (P21 comments for 19: +3).

There is a sense here that both the victim and the perpetrator need to take responsibility for this experience. In the first instance the recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment

to stop because “they have to try” (P21 comments for 20: +2). However, although the recipient may need specialist help “to come to terms with what has happened to them” (P10 comments for 9: +3), practical support should also be given and geared towards letting “them know how they can help themselves” (P10 comments for 16: +3). As mentioned above, those who make false complaints need to be held accountable for their actions through punishment (33: +4). Similarly, it is the perpetrator who needs to be held accountable for their own actions. For example, in the context of workplace sexual harassment, it is not the case that employers should be held legally responsible for harassment whether they knew about it or not (17: -5). This is because “sexual harassment is down to the individual and no-one else can be held responsible” (P21 comments for 17: -5).

In this narrative, it is implied that the perpetrator has psychological problems which can be dealt with through counselling (34: +4). Given that the perpetrator has such problems they are, to some extent, deserving of people’s sympathy (57: +2). This is not to say that if the perpetrator breaks the law, by for example, breaching an injunction order, they should not be arrested (32: +5). Rather to solve the problem of sexual harassment, these psychological issues need to be addressed which is not accomplished through more punitive measures such as sacking someone from their job (29: -3).

### *Factor 3: The Accountability Narrative*

[illegible]

### **8.7 Factor 4: The Collective Action & Deterrent Narrative**

Factor 4 explains 3.737 of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.682. Two participants loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 16 was a man in his 30s who described himself as a job seeker. Participant 20 was a 60 year old woman who worked as a housing manager. Participant 20 had also taken part in the Q study described in chapter 6 and had loaded significantly on factor 7 – the Relationship narrative.

#### *Interpretation*

As with the Accountability narrative outlined above, this narrative draws attention to the ways in which sexual harassment is an important issue that can occur in a range of circumstances and contexts (54: -4). In this narrative, collapsing boundaries between the public and private spheres is prioritised, with sexual harassment being recognised as something that should be an illegal offence that can occur in the private sphere of the home, public places in general and the workplace in particular (23: -3; 51: +4; 56: +3; 58: -5). In the context of the home, sexual harassment is not conceptualised as a matter that should be dealt with privately (49: -5). Rather, as with incidents which happen in more public areas, sexual harassment should be reported.

The emphasis here is on collective action to challenge sexual harassment by, for example, encouraging witnesses to report it and intervene if they suspect a person is being sexually harassed (48: +3; 50: +2; 43: +2). Government interventions such as providing instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint may also be necessary to make sure everyone is aware about procedures for lodging grievances (60: +2; 12: +3).

The process of making a complaint should be made easy for the victim in the sense that they should be treated sympathetically by people in general and the police in particular. Indeed, specialist organisations are needed to provide victims with support (9: +3).

It is emphasised that recipients should not be victimised for making a complaint and the police should make the process as easy as possible through questioning victims in a sensitive manner and making sure that questioning occurs in a non-threatening environment (28: +4; 45: +5; 53: +5; 52: +3). However, the gender of the police dealing with the case is not central

to fostering sensitive, supportive victim-orientated procedures so recipients should not be allowed to request that a same-sex officer deals with their case (47: -4). What is more important is that police officers receive specific training for dealing with sexual harassment (44: -4).

Although sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police, there is a sense of pessimism about whether the police have the power to stop such behaviour (32: +2; 6: +2). It appears that “we need stronger deterrents for sexual offenders” (P20 comments for 3: +4) such as arresting perpetrators who breach sexual harassment injunctions and/or denying promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment (3: +4). These deterrents are prioritised over providing counselling for perpetrators (34: -4) or interventions such as verbal warnings (21: -2). Indeed, the perpetrator is not seen as deserving of sympathy nor having any right to anonymity (34: -4; 40: -4). Thus, it seems that “stronger deterrents” coupled with a collective commitment to stop sexual harassment is what is needed to challenge this behaviour.

#### *Factor 4: The Collective Action & Deterrent Narrative*

[illegible]

### 8.8 *Factor 5: The D-I-Y Narrative*

This factor explains 3.579% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.610. One male student loaded significantly on this factor (Participant 39)

#### *Interpretation*

Unlike the previous narratives discussed so far, the D-I-Y narrative stressed that recipients should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves by telling the initiator to stop (25: +4; 20: +5). An informal confrontation is “the first step before a complaint as they [the initiator] may not know” that they are sexually harassing the recipient (P39 comments for 20: +5). This initial step is represented as relatively straightforward and as such there is no need to train people to deal with sexual harassment (13: +3) and it certainly does not require the government to provide training or instructions on how to handle these experiences or make a complaint (10: +3; 40: -4). The recipient is capable of doing this alone and there is no need for friends to intervene (50: -3).

This initial step is considered to be a reasonably effective method of stopping sexual harassment and as such there is not any real need for all complaints to be referred to the authorities because “it can be dealt with before this on most occasions” (P39 comments for 35: -5). However, important to note is that the authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion (4: +4). Generally speaking, dealing with sexual harassment is not a job for the police but rather a workplace issue. There is a need for protection in the workplace and dealing with sexual harassment cases is certainly not a misuse of employer’s time (26: -3; 58: -2). However, employers cannot be expected to pursue complaints based on the recipient’s word alone and it is often far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment has occurred (55: +3; 22: +3). Evidence which could be brought to bear on investigations is the recipient’s past sexual behaviour as this might help determine whether sexual harassment has occurred or not (38: +4). However, like the Accountability narrative, it is important for individuals to held responsible for their actions so if a person is found to have deliberately made a false complaint then they should be punished (33: +5).

Similarly, if a person is found guilty of sexual harassment then it would entirely fair to deny them promotion opportunities, give them verbal warnings and/or apply injunctions (8: -3; 24:



+2; 2: +2). Sexually harassing behaviour is not necessarily indicative of some psychological problem so counselling would not be a particularly good way of stopping sexual harassment. Indeed, it is the perpetrator who is ultimately responsible for their problematic actions and as such they are not deserving of people's sympathy, nor can responsibility be shifted to employers (57: -4; 17: -5). While employers cannot be held responsible for workplace sexual harassment, they do have a duty of care to the recipient once a complaint has been lodged in terms of protecting them from retaliation from the accused (19: +3).

In short, sexual harassment is reasonably easy to deal with "on most occasions" by the recipient informally asking the initiator to stop (P39 comments, 35: -5; 20: +5). Since it is generally quite easy to deal with recipients should certainly not be compensated for their experiences (37: -4). The difficulty lies, it seems, once a grievance becomes formalised so it is best that people should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves (25: +4).

## Factor 5: The D-I-Y Narrative

					51 Occurrences of sexual harassment in the home should be reported					
					42 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers					
				1 I feel that making sexual harassment a criminal offence is taking things too far	18 Sexual harassment complaints should be taken with a grain of salt	7 Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment				
			30 Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time	6 The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment	15 People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions	3 A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested	31 The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be revealed			
			27 The courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment	46 There is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home	49 Sexual harassment that happens in the home is better dealt with privately	43 One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassed	21 Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment			
		60 The government should provide instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint	5 The courts should not be responsible for providing protection for recipients of sexual harassment	44 There is no need to provide the police with specific training for dealing with sexual harassment cases	56 Sexual harassment that happens in public places should be reported	59 Sexual harassment in public places should be dealt with by the police	45 The police should question recipients of sexual harassment in a sensitive manner	22 It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred		
		26 There is no need for protection against sexual harassment in the workplace	58 Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time	41 There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places	40 The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret	29 An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked	36 A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked	55 The recipient's word is insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued		
		57 People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment	8 It is unfair to deny promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment	23 Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary	39 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police	28 People should be sympathetic to individuals who claim that they have been sexually harassed	14 Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment	24 Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment	19 Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused	25 People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves
17 Employers should be held legally responsible for workplace sexual harassment whether they knew about or not	34 A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counselling	50 One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed	11 The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment	12 Everyone should be made aware of how they can make a sexual harassment complaint	16 Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support	53 Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment	52 The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment	13 I feel that providing everyone with training on how to deal with sexual harassment is unnecessary	4 The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion	33 A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished
35 All complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities	37 Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation	32 Sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police	48 People that witness sexual harassment should report it	9 There should be specialist organisations that provide support to those who have been sexually harassed	54 Sexual harassment is a minor issue	47 Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case	2 Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	10 It should not be the government's responsibility to provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment	38 The police should take in to account the recipient's past sexual behaviour	20 The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

### **8.9     *Factor 6: The No Place Like Home Narrative***

Factor 6 explains 3.363% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.610. One woman (participant 6) loaded significantly on this factor.

#### *Interpretation*

This narrative appears to prioritise sexual harassment as a phenomenon that occurs in public places such as the workplace (41: +4) rather than as something that is likely to occur in the private sphere of the home. As such there is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home, and whether or not it should be dealt with privately in this context is not at issue (46: +3; 49: -1). Indeed, it is the recipient's partner rather than their friends who is seen as having a role to play in stopping sexual harassment by actively intervening and protecting the recipient (43: +5; 50: -3).

It is not the case that this is a private matter to be resolved at an interpersonal level, rather it is the job of the police and the courts to deal with cases of sexual harassment as these services have the power to stop it (32: +4; 5: -4; 6: -3; 11: -3). Whilst it is the primary responsibility of these services to actively resolve cases, everyone has a duty to report it if they should witness such behaviour and as such everyone should be made aware of how they can make a complaint (48: +3; 12: +3). The process of making a complaint means that the identity of the person making the complaint will be revealed. However, this should not be a frightening prospect as people should be protected from negative comments about their actions (31: +5; 15: +2).

The process of dealing with a person once they have been found guilty of sexual harassment appears to be more straightforward in the workplace compared to other public places. In the workplace penalties such as being sacked or being denied promotion opportunities can be imposed. However, outside the workplace, although a person should be arrested if they breach an injunction order, injunctions in general are not considered to be a good way of dealing with sexual harassment (3: +4; 2: -4). Similarly, imposing fines is not a good way of dealing with it as "the people concerned will take this too softly and get away with it more" (P6 comments for 7: -5). However, more stringent methods such as prison sentences are also deemed not a good way of handling perpetrators (14: -3). It should be noted that this position

on prison sentences does not appear to be tied up with the question of rehabilitation as considerations about whether the initiator should receive counselling is outwith the focus of this narrative (34: -1). Instead, it seems that the issue here is getting the 'right' level of punishment which appears to be difficult to do outside the workplace context.

## Factor 6: The No Place Like Home Narrative

					47 Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case								
					10 It should not be the government's responsibility to provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment								
					58 Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time	45 The police should question recipients of sexual harassment in a sensitive manner	53 Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment						
					57 People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment	49 Sexual harassment that happens in the home is better dealt with privately	33 The police should take in to account the recipient's past sexual behaviour	33 A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished	56 Sexual harassment that happens in public places should be reported				
					55 The recipient's word is insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued	30 Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time	60 The government should provide instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint	39 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police	37 Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation				
					14 Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment	26 There is no need for protection against sexual harassment in the workplace	34 A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counselling	36 A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked	59 Sexual harassment in public places should be dealt with by the police	15 People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions	29 An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked		
					11 The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment	24 Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment	52 The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment	35 All complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities	27 The courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment	13 I feel that providing everyone with training on how to deal with sexual harassment is unnecessary	12 Everyone should be made aware of how they can make a sexual harassment complaint		
					8 It is unfair to deny promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment	18 Sexual harassment complaints should be taken with a grain of salt	21 Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	51 Occurrences of sexual harassment in the home should be reported	42 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers	16 Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support	22 It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred	9 There should be specialist organisations that provide support to those who have been sexually harassed	3 A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested
7 Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment	5 The courts should not be responsible for providing protection for recipients of sexual harassment	6 The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment	23 Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary	25 People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves	17 Employers should be held legally responsible for workplace sexual harassment whether they knew about or not	54 Sexual harassment is a minor issue	4 The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion	46 There is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home	41 There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places	31 The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be revealed			
1 I feel that making sexual harassment a criminal offence is taking things too far	2 Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	50 One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed	28 People should be sympathetic to individuals who claim that they have been sexually harassed	20 The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop	19 Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused	40 The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret	44 There is no need to provide the police with specific training for dealing with sexual harassment cases	48 People that witness sexual harassment should report it	32 Sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police	43 One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassed			
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5			

### **8.10 Factor 7: Overview**

This factor explains 2.823% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.270. One man (participant 13) loaded significantly on this factor. As noted in chapter 6 this factor is bipolar which suggests that two ‘opposed’ exemplifying Q sort configurations have been expressed within this factor. More specifically, the statement positionings in these two exemplifying Q sorts represent the mirror image of each other. Therefore, to explicate these two positions of sexual harassment policy, both Q sort configurations will be read as narratives.

### **8.11 Factor 7A: The Burden of Proof Narrative**

#### *Interpretation*

For the Burden of Proof narrative, the issue of sexual harassment is noteworthy in as much that it is important to point out that there is little that services can do to stop it (54: -5; 11: +4; 6: +4). The police and the courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment largely because it is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment has occurred (11: +4; 6: +4; 22: +3). This makes laws about it unnecessary, and in the context of workplace sexual harassment, the process of dealing with sexual harassment cases a misuse of employers’ time (23: +5; 58: +3). Since the police do not have the power to stop it, sexual harassment in public places should neither be reported to nor dealt with by this particular service (56: -4; 59: -3).

Since complaints of sexual harassment can be untrue, alleged victims should not be treated with kid gloves (33: +5). When complaints are handed to the police, there is no need for officers to question recipients in a sensitive manner, to take steps to ensure that recipients are questioned in a non-threatening environment or to protect them from further victimisation (45: -5; 52: -4; 53: -3). If it is found to be the case that a person has deliberately made a false complaint about sexual harassment they should be punished (33: +5). This reluctance to treat recipients with kid gloves is reflected in a general unwillingness to support training initiatives on how to deal with sexual harassment (13: +2). Nor should it be the case that the government provides instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint (60: -3). It seems that, in this narrative, lodging complaints about sexual harassment is generally considered problematic – it is difficult to prove, people may lie – it appears that it all seems a bit unnecessary when it can be dealt with privately in some contexts with the recipient asking

the initiator to stop (20: +2). Recipients are capable of asking the initiator to stop by themselves so there is no need for friends to intervene (50: -3).

In circumstances where a complaint of sexual harassment is being processed, there is no need to protect the identity of the accused (40: -4). This does not mean to say that the courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the accused but that does not translate in to letting the initiator get away with wrong doing (27: -3; 3: +2). For example, if the initiator breaches a sexual harassment injunction then they should be arrested (3: +2). The emphasis here is on keeping the perpetrator away from the recipient through, for example, injunctions and verbal warnings (2: +3; 21: +4). Penalties for sexual harassment such as denying someone promotion opportunities seem unfairly punitive (8: +3). The key to dealing with sexual harassment is resolving the cause of the problem. Therefore, making sure that the guilty party receives counselling is considered a good way to stop sexual harassment (34: +3).

*Factor 7A: The Burden of Proof Narrative*

					39 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police					
					42 People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers					
				55 The recipient's word is insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued	43 One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassed	57 People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment				
		51 Occurrences of sexual harassment in the home should be reported	48 People that witness sexual harassment should report it	36 A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked	9 There should be specialist organisations that provide support to those who have been sexually harassed	46 There is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home				
		38 The police should take in to account the recipient's past sexual behaviour	35 All complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities	37 Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation	16 Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support	5 The courts should not be responsible for providing protection for recipients of sexual harassment				
	50 One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed	41 There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places	17 Employers should be held legally responsible for workplace sexual harassment whether they knew about or not	30 Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time	19 Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused	20 The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop	58 Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time			
	53 Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment	44 There is no need to provide the police with specific training for dealing with sexual harassment cases	32 Sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police	26 There is no need for protection against sexual harassment in the workplace	14 Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment	13 I feel that providing everyone with training on how to deal with sexual harassment is unnecessary	34 A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counselling			
	52 The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment	60 The government should provide instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint	47 Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case	31 The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be revealed	28 People should be sympathetic to individuals who claim that they have been sexually harassed	18 Sexual harassment complaints should be taken with a grain of salt	7 Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment	22 It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred	21 Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	
54 Sexual harassment is a minor issue	56 Sexual harassment that happens in public places should be reported	59 Sexual harassment in public places should be dealt with by the police	29 An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked	10 It should not be the government's responsibility to provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment	25 People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves	4 The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion	3 A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested	8 It is unfair to deny promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment	11 The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment	33 A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished
45 The police should question recipients of sexual harassment in a sensitive manner	40 The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret	27 The courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment	24 Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment	12 Everyone should be made aware of how they can make a sexual harassment complaint	15 People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions	1 I feel that making sexual harassment a criminal offence is taking things too far	49 Sexual harassment that happens in the home is better dealt with privately	2 Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	6 The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment	23 Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

**Most Disagree**

Most Agree



## **8.12 Factor 7B: The Complaint Orientated Narrative**

### *Interpretation*

Whilst in the scheme of things, sexual harassment cannot be considered a major issue; it is something that requires legal and governmental regulation (54: +5). Therefore laws about sexual harassment are necessary and it is the government's responsibility to make sure the public are equipped to make a sexual harassment complaint by providing instructions on this process (23: -5; 60: +3).

There is a sense of optimism about the power of legal regulation to end sexual harassment. Police services and the courts are seen as having the power to stop it (11: -4; 6: -4). Proving that sexual harassment has occurred seems reasonably straightforward so again there is a sense of confidence that complaints can be resolved and sexual harassment stopped (22: -4). Given this, dealing with sexual harassment cases cannot be considered a misuse of employers' time.

However, like the No Place like Home narrative, in this narrative, the question of what penalties to impose on perpetrators appears to be more straightforward in the workplace compared to other public places (56: +4). In the workplace, penalties such as verbal warnings, the threat of being sacked or losing out on promotion opportunities are generally seen as good and fair ways of stopping sexual harassment (24: +2; 29: +2; 8: -3). However, outside the workplace, penalties such as injunctions, fines or verbal warnings from the police do not have the same impact as they do not involve losing (economic or career-related) status or rewards. As with the No Place Like Home narrative, the issue seems to be related to getting the 'right' level of punishment which appears to be difficult to do outside the workplace context.

Given that penalties are considered more effective than other methods such as counselling to stop perpetrators, the impression is given that the initiator is not someone with problems which give rise to their problematic behaviour (34: -3). Indeed, there is a sense that the initiator should not be treated with kid gloves. For example, the idea that the courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the accused is prioritised in this narrative (27: +3).

Interestingly, however, this narrative prioritises anonymity for the accused (40: +4). My impression of this statement positioning coupled with others in this configuration is that this may be linked to practical considerations around further repercussions and victimisation. For example, this narrative prioritises protecting recipients from further victimisation and negative repercussions (53: +3; 5: -2). This concern does not appear to stem from sympathy for the victim as this issue is outwith the focus of this narrative (28: 0). Similarly, the question of whether the accused deserves sympathy is not a central concern here (57: -1). Instead, this narrative focuses on the need to protect the parties involved from further wrongdoing which might involve keeping the identity of the person accused a secret (40: +4). The need to prevent further victimisation is also reflected in suggested police practices with the victim. For example, such practices should include sensitive lines of questioning in an environment that is non-threatening to the victim (45: +5; 52: +3).

What is emphasised in this narrative is the need to encourage people to report and make complaints about sexual harassment (60: +3; 56: +4). As mentioned above, this is reflected in the support for victim-sensitive reporting processes and the prioritisation of the idea that recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment. Given that the emphasis is on encouraging reporting behaviour, people who make false complaints should not be punished as this may inhibit reporting more generally (33: -5).

*Factor 7B: The Complaint Orientated Narrative*

[illegible]

### **8.13 Factor 8: The Rehabilitation Narrative**

This narrative explains 2.697% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.213. One woman loaded significantly on this factor. Participant 2 was a voluntary worker for a violence crisis centre in her 40s.

#### *Interpretation*

In this narrative, sexual harassment is “frequently” a minor issue (P2 comments for 54: +3) and as such many complaints of this behaviour should be taken with a pinch of salt as “legislation can make mountains out of molehills” (P2 comments for 18: +2). Therefore, authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion (4: +4). That said, cases of sexual harassment should not really be a police matter as it is not really their role to “protect us from crassness” (P2 comments for; 39: -3; 32: -4). Indeed the involvement of the police is generally considered too extreme. For example, verbal warnings from the police or fines are considered a “nut and sledgehammer” approach to dealing with sexual harassment (P2 comments for 21: -3; 7: -5). Unsurprising, the suggestion that prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment is considered utter “rubbish” and a reflection of “an obsession in this punitive country and almost always run counter to rehabilitation” (P2 comments for 14: -5). Therefore counselling rather than punitive punishment is prioritised as a good way of dealing with sexual harassment (34: +5).

Having made the point that police involvement is generally inappropriate, current legal and service practices in operation for complaining and victim treatment are considered in this narrative. More specifically, people should not be victimised for making complaints and it is appropriate for services to adopt victim-sensitive practices such as allowing the recipient to request that a same-sex officer deals with their case (53: +3; 45: +3; 47: +5). Given that this narrative is generally against the implementation of punitive procedures, those who make false complaints should not be punished for their actions (33: -4). However, given the difficulties in proving whether or not sexual harassment has occurred, it is necessary that the police take into account the recipient’s past sexual behaviour when investigating a complaint (22: +2; 38: +3).

As mentioned above, incidents of “crassness” more generally in public life are not a matter for the police (P2 comments for 39: -3; 59: -3), nor should it be the government’s responsibility to train people on how to deal with sexual harassment. Instead this is seen more as an educational issue where it “should be part of social skills teaching in secondary schools” (P2 comments for 10: -4 & 60: -3). However, sexual harassment is more of an issue in the workplace. Generally employers do not adequately protect people from such behaviour when “they should” (P2 comments for 42: -3). Again what is emphasised is the need to move away from punitive punishment as penalties such as denying promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment is considered unfair as “past mistakes should always be forgiven if reform has occurred” (P2 comments for 8: +3). Instead, in this context, verbal warnings from employers would be the “ideal” way of dealing with it (P2 comments for 24: +4).

### *Factor 8: The Rehabilitation Narrative*

[illegible]

#### **8.14 Factor 9: The Punitive Narrative**

This factor explains 2.658% of the variance and has an eigenvalue of 1.196. One woman (participant 31) loaded significantly on this factor.

##### *Interpretation*

In this narrative, sexual harassment is seen as an important issue that requires a strong line to be taken with perpetrators (54: -5). This issue should not be dealt with solely by the police through for example verbal warnings (32: -4; 21: -3). Instead, perpetrators should be punished by the authorities using strong deterrents such as prison sentences, fines or sacked if it occurs in the workplace (14: +4; 7: +3; 29: +3; 24: -3). Punishment is what is required, not rehabilitation (34: -4). To clamp down on sexual harassment, it is important that it is recognised as a criminal offence, that instances of sexual harassment be clearly communicated as unacceptable by the recipient, and that incidents are reported when it occurs on more than one occasion in public life (1: -3; 20: +4; 56: +3; 4: +3; 26: -4). All such reports and complaints should be referred to the authorities who have the power to investigate complaints and implement punishment (35: +3).

This is not to say that authorities such as the courts should be unconcerned about the rights of accused and those found guilty of sexual harassment (27: -3). Indeed, once they have paid for their crime, it would be unfair to continue to punish them through, for example, denying them promotion opportunities (8: +4). Nor is it the case that complainants are taken at face-value as innocent victims. It is recognised that people may lie and lodge false complaints (33: +5). To assess the truthfulness of complaints, victims should not be treated with kid gloves but rather fully interrogated (5: -5). People who deliberately make false complaints should lose their rights to anonymity and be punished appropriately (33: -5; 31: +5). It seems that strong deterrents can not only put an end to incidents of sexual harassment but also lies and false complaints. Therefore taking a more punitive stance is justified.

### *Factor 9: The Punitive Narrative*

[illegible]



### ***8.15 Constructing Victims: Similarities and Differences***

Returning to the issue of secondary victimisation through unsympathetic, negative responses to victims in the aftermath of sexual harassment, the ten narratives identified here suggest that the treatment of victims is neither straightforward nor polarised as either negative or positive. Instead the question of how to deal with or treat victims, perpetrators and the issue of sexual harassment more generally is composed of manifold considerations. In this section, I will discuss the ways in which victim and perpetrator treatment is contextualised within and across narratives by focusing largely on two main issues (1) sympathetic treatment, (2) relevance of recipient's past sexual behaviour, and (3), false allegations.

### ***8.16 Sympathetic Treatment***

Three of the narratives identified, the Impact narrative (Factor 1), the Proper Process narrative (factor 2) and the Collective Action and Deterrent narrative (factor 4), explicitly prioritised sympathetic treatment of victims by people more generally. In the Impact narrative, victim-sensitive treatment is expressed as a priority in general treatment of the victim by the public and in police practices due to the emotional impact sexual harassment can have on victims (28: +3; 53: +5; 52: +4; 45: +3; 47: +3). Indeed, the need for a sympathetic stance is prioritised over similar treatment for the accused which is not a central concern in this narrative (57: +1).

The prioritisation of this particular form of sympathetic stance resonates with criticisms of police services mentioned earlier that victim-sensitive practices are in order to take into account the significance of the experience for victims, particularly women (e.g. Gregory and Lees, 1999; Goodey, 2005; Anderson and Doherty, 2008). The recognition of emotional impact of sexual violence in public and legal discourses has been treated by some researchers as crucial in marking forms of sexualised/gendered violence as a significant issue (Gregory and Lees 1999). Indeed, the admission of emotional impact evidence in courts has been seen as an important move in moving away from conceptualisations of sexual violence solely in terms of a physical act in which courts focus on objective evidence of some kind of physical transgression (Raitt and Zeedyk, 2000).

However, the emphasis on psychological/emotional impact on victims can be considered a double-edged sword. As Raitt and Zeedyk (2000) point out, in cases of rape, emotional impact is viewed through the lens of disorder which allows for victim-blaming discourses to be drawn on to construct the recipient as mentally unstable and/or that their emotional vulnerability makes them particularly open to misinterpretation of events or giving out the 'wrong' signals. Since the importance of the incident becomes judged through notions of emotional harm, victims who do not evidence emotional, psychological upset or damage can be positioned as not 'true' victims and/or allows the incident to be minimised as trivial.

The increasing importance of emotional harm in police and court decisions in the UK can be seen in the introduction of victim statements in 1996 in which victims are invited to make a statement as to impact of their experience of violence on their life. This has been used in cases of violence more generally and sexual harassment in particular (Morgen and Sanders, 1999). The victim statement can have an impact on bail conditions, changing or dropping charges and sentencing (Morgen and Sanders, 1999). Whilst this has been treated as an important move to allow the victim to 'speak' to the court as it were, it may also put pressure on victims to pathologise themselves in ways they would otherwise choose not to in order to ensure that their case is taken seriously.

In a similar vein, the Proper Process narrative foregrounds the victim by drawing attention to the need for sympathetic treatment of the victim by people in general and emphasises emotional impact of sexual harassment on victims by calling for special organisational help and support (28: +3 52: +3; 9: +4; 16: +4). However, whilst notions of emotional impact are positioned as central to this narrative, so too are more pragmatic considerations around the benefits of victim-orientated approaches such as reducing the possibility that a complaint is withdrawn. The importance of pragmatic issues positions the police as more accountable and more responsible for complaint withdrawal which has been predominantly constructed as an individual choice over which police services have little control (Walker, 2005).

Like the Impact narrative, within the Proper process narrative, sympathy for the accused is not a central focus (57: +1). Indeed, the emphasis on concerns for the victim, appears to preclude understanding and/or sympathy for the perpetrator here. This narrative is not unlike neoliberal versions of law and order in which offences are positioned as the fault of the individual and thus require punishment (Reiner, 2007). This more neoliberal stance on perpetrators is also reflected in the Collective action and Deterrent narrative in which sympathy for the victim is prioritised over sympathy for the accused (28: +4; 57: -2). More specifically, strong deterrents are positioned as need to curb expression of individual problematic behaviour. This version of punishment is expressed in a more extreme form in the Punitive narrative (Factor 9) in which versions of 'Zero Tolerance' are drawn to construct sexual harassment as something that needs clamping down on through tough punishment (e.g. Hope and Sparks, 2000). However, unlike the first three narratives discussed here the Punitive narrative does not prioritise sympathetic treatment of victims and perhaps less unsurprisingly perpetrators (28: +1; 57: -2). In the Punitive narrative, the emphasis is more on cracking down on problematic behaviours, including false allegations, however this latter issue will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

In the other narratives identified, sympathetic treatment of victims and/or perpetrators is not strongly prioritised. In two of the narratives, the accountability narrative (Factor 3) and the Burden of Proof narrative (Factor 7a) sympathy for the victim is outwith the focus of the narrative (28: 0 for both factors). Instead, in both narratives an adversarial approach is taken up in relation to the victim in which burden of proof plays a central role (Hahn and Oaksford, 2007). For example, in the Accountability narrative, this is reflected here in participant 21's claim that the victim rather than the accused is "innocent until proven guilty" (P21 comments for 52: +2). Similarly, in the Burden of Proof narrative, interrogation of the victim is favoured over victim-orientated police practices. In both narratives, it seems that the victim as well as the accused is essentially on trial in investigations (Gregory and Lees, 1999). This approach to burden of proof has not been uncommon in sexual violence cases. As discussed in chapter 2, within legal cases,

the burden of proof rested largely with the victim to prove that consent was withheld. This particular representation of evidence functions to place the burden of responsibility for communicating why a particular behaviour is considered unwanted or inappropriate solely on the victim (e.g. Kurth, Spiller and Brown Travis, 2001; Monti, 2000) . The danger here is that the victim can be construed as accountable for offender behaviour where it can be argued that the victim did not communicate that particular behaviours were unwelcome (Lazard, Buys, Callaghan, Keating and Motzkau, 2007).

Unlike the Burden of Proof narrative, within the Accountability narrative it is acknowledged that sexual harassment can have significant emotional impact on victims and thus, specialist victim support is necessary. However, as discussed above, recognition of the emotional and psychological impact of harassment is not necessarily unproblematic.

In the Complaint-Orientated narrative (Factor 7b) sympathy for victims and perpetrators are not central to this narrative (28: 0; 57: -1). A similar position is taken on this issue in the Rehabilitation narrative (Factor 8; 28: +1; 57: +1). However, in both these narratives, emphasis is placed on preventing secondary victimisation of the recipient through endorsement of victim-sensitive police practices. Unlike the Impact narrative, concern with such practices does not appear to stem from the prioritisation of the emotional impact of experiences of sexual harassment. Instead, secondary victimisation is positioned, in and of itself, as an issue which needs to be addressed.

Like the Complaint-Orientated narrative, sympathetic treatment of victims is not central to the D-I-Y narrative (Factor 5: 28: 0). However, in contrast to all other narratives identified, the D-I-Y narrative emphasises that recipients of sexual harassment are capable of dealing with problematic behaviour independent of third party assistance. The inclusion of victim-orientated police and agency practices are not of particular concern here, partially because sexual harassment is conceptualised as a workplace issue and partly because only repetitive instances of sexual harassment need to be referred to the authorities. The emphasis on

individual responsibility for handling perpetrators of sexual harassment resonates with neo-liberal as well as more conservative informed arguments that have been advanced around women's victimisation. For example, Roiphe (1994) contends that the emphasis on women as victims represents recipients as weak, passive and incapable of resisting 'everyday 'mundane' forms of sexual harassment. As noted in chapter 1, these particular arguments locate resistance within individuals rather than wider social practices and as such ignore wider power relations operating within so called 'mundane' 'everyday' interactions (Samuels, 2003).

In the No Place like Home narrative (Factor 6) there is tentative disagreement with the issue of the need for sympathetic treatment for both victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment (28: -2; 57: -2). However, this does not translate into lack of general positive support for victims. What appears to be more central in this narrative is drawing boundaries around which environments protection is needed which include public places, rather than the home. Indeed, a person's partner has a role to play in stopping sexually harassing behaviour. This appears to position sexual harassment as less of a possibility in intimate relationships which creates the impression that sexual violence only occurs in specific kinds of relationships

### ***8.17 Cry Wolf? False Allegations and Past Sexual Behaviour***

As mentioned above, one reason cited for low reporting rates of sexual harassment as well as sexual violence more generally is victim concerns that their complaint will not be believed and treated as a false allegation (Gavey and Gow, 2001). A number of gendered/sexualised assumptions have become interwoven with the issue of false reporting. For example, representations of false allegations include the notion that women cry rape to conceal 'deviant' (active) feminine sexual behaviour (Gavey and Gow, 2001, Gavey, 2005), and/or the alleged promiscuity of victims is used to undermine claims of unwanted sexual attention and non-consent. Despite police services admittance that false allegations are uncommon, the number often becomes inflated within public discourses (Anderson and Doherty, 2008; Gavey and Gow, 2001; Gregory and Lees, 1999).

The problem of false allegations was raised as a significant issue in seven of the narratives identified. Statement 33 - a person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished – was positioned as strongly disagreed with in the Complaint Orientated narrative (33: -5) and the Rehabilitation narrative (33: -4). However, this statement was occupied as strongly agree position in the Impact narrative (33: +3), the Accountability narrative (33:+4), The D-I-Y narrative (33: +5), the Burden of Proof narrative (33: +5) and the Punitive narrative (33: +5). However, the ways in which this issue was taken up, how central false allegations is to investigative procedures and how this become interwoven with concerns around the victims sexual reputation differed across narratives. For example emphasis on identifying false from true reports was only flagged up as a significant issue in the Accountability narrative which, as mentioned above, was concerned with burden of proof. Here the need to check motives was positioned as integral to investigations processes (36: +4). Interesting, within the Burden of Proof narrative, checking victim motives for making complaints as not conceptualised as central to the process (36: -1), largely it seems because the truthfulness of reports are difficult to establish. Indeed, in the Impact narrative, the D-I-Y narrative, and the Punitive narrative, the need to actively check motives were not central to policy considerations.

Despite the positioning of checking victim motives being of less importance to the punitive narrative (36: +1), the D-I-Y narrative (36: +2) and the Impact narrative (36: 0), the issue of false reporting was taken up in specific ways within these narratives. Within the Punitive narrative, punishment of those who make false complaints involved losing victim rights to anonymity (31: +5) which appears to draw on notions of ‘name and shame’ deterrents to curb such behaviour (Bell, 2002). The only other narrative, which positions waiving anonymity rights for victims as important is the No Place like Home narrative (31: +5). However, in contrast to the Punitive narrative, the No place like Home narrative, the positioning of revealing the complainant’s identity as important does not appear to be out of concern with punitive punishment. Rather in the latter narrative, it seems that within a culture which supports complaints such rights would be unnecessary

as victims would be protected from secondary victimisation.

Unlike the other narratives in which punishment for false allegations is agreed with, the D-I-Y narrative places emphasis on the need to take into account the victim's past sexual behaviour as evidence for verifying a complaint (38: +4). This resonates with predominant conceptualisations of the relevance of the victim's sexual reputation/character in court processes for establishing whether or not sexual violence as occurred (Anderson and Doherty, 2008). Interestingly, only one other narrative – the Rehabilitation narrative - prioritised agreement for the notion that the recipient's past sexual behaviour needs to be taken into account within investigations (38: +3). However, within the Rehabilitation narrative, liberal conceptualisations of rehabilitation and reform are prioritised over punitive punishment and as such individuals who make false complaints are seen as undeserving of punishment (33: -4).

Like the Rehabilitation narrative, within the Complaint Orientated narrative, people who make false complaints are positioned as undeserving of punishment (33: -5). However, whilst in the Rehabilitation narrative, a general point about the problems of favouring punishment over rehabilitation appears to be being made, in the Complaint Orientated narrative, disagreement with punishing the act of making false allegations appears to stem from a concern that this will inhibit reporting of sexual harassment. Therefore, in the Complaint Orientated narrative there appears to be a move away from constructions of false allegations which emphasise the vulnerability of those accused to those which highlight the vulnerability of individuals, to sexual harassment through recourse to the need to support reporting (Boyle, 2005).

Only one narrative – the Impact narrative – strongly prioritised the irrelevance of the victim's past sexual behaviour in investigations of complaints (38: -5). However, whilst this narrative appears to move away from more traditional representations of victim sexual conduct as having a bearing on experiences of sexual violence mentioned above, it does engage with notions of the danger of false allegations. More specifically, within this narrative, punishing those who

make false allegations is needed because of the possible negative emotional impact that untrue complaints have on those accused (33: +3). As Boyle (2005) notes, “stories of false allegations...work to construct...sexual assault as stories about the vulnerability of men rather than men’s abuse of women” (P.78). The construction of false reporting as an ever-present possibility leaves open the positioning and repositioning of the accused as victim and the victim as the perpetrator of wrong-doing which functions to undermine claims of sexual violence in general and sexual harassment in particular.

#### **8.18 *Summary: Moving Beyond Secondary Victimisation?***

The ten narratives identified highlight the complexity of perspectives of dealing with both victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment. Interesting to note that whilst only three of the narratives explicitly focused on the importance of taking up a sympathetic approach to victims of sexual harassment, the absence of this explicit stance in some narratives did not necessarily mean that victim-orientated practices were not advocated. However, even in the case where sympathetic stances were taken, the issue of the false allegation was raised as an ever-present possibility in seven of the narratives. As argued above, the continued doubt of the truthfulness of complaints allows open the possibility of repositioning victims as perpetrators and perpetrators as victims.

In the next chapter, the exploration of the positionings of victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment is shifted from policy considerations to broader constructions of recipient-initiator relations operating in the sexual harassment discourses. More specifically, in the following chapter, I use Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore how women victims/male perpetrators, women offenders/male victims, and same-sex victims/perpetrators become constructed in interview data. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which victim and perpetrator positionings become constituted through a heterosexualised gaze which functions to (re)produce heterosexualised femininities as passive/powerless and heterosexualised masculinities as active/powerful.



## **Chapter 9: ‘Proper’ victims, ‘proper’ perpetrators – Unwanted Sexual Attention as a Heterosexualised Relation**

### **9.1     *Introduction***

As discussed in Chapter 2, dominant representations of sexual violence in general and sexual harassment in particular, construct “this set of behaviours as deriving from a man and directed at a woman” (Brewis & Linstead, 2000: 84). I argued in Chapter 2 that this particular gendered relation tends to re-inscribe a version of normative heterosexual power relations which prescribe feminine sexuality as passive and male sexuality as active. In this chapter, I seek to unpack the ways in which masculine and feminine sexualities are constructed in relation to victims and perpetrators of unwanted sexual attention within interview data. The central argument running through this chapter focuses on the ways in which constructions of active masculine and passive feminine heterosexuality are deployed in various ways to produce women as the ‘true’ and ‘proper’ ‘victims’ and men as the ‘true’ and ‘proper’ ‘perpetrators’ of unwanted sexual attention. This exploration draws attention to the ways in which ‘deviations’ from normative versions of heterosexual masculinity and femininity are used to present women as ‘improper’ perpetrators and men as ‘improper’ victims. During this analysis, I will explicate the centrality of passivity in constructions of women as ‘true’ victims by examining how active feminine sexualities become embedded within notions of accountability in constructions of unwanted sexual attention. Throughout this discussion, I will explore how different discursive constructions aid the maintenance of ‘real’ hegemonic versions of masculinity and femininity.

To explore the above issues, I will focus on five constructions identified. These were: (1) men as a sexual threat; (2) the sex-emotion distinction; (3) emotion, femininity and sexuality; (4) not ‘real’ women/ not ‘real’ men; and (5) unruly women. Each construction will be addressed in turn in the following sections.

### **9.2     *Men as sexual threat***

Physicality is understood as central to ideals of masculinity and masculine sexuality. As Weinke (1998) notes, cultural ideals of male embodiment are associated with “having a formidable presence in the world, one that conveys in

an instant notions of power, control and invulnerability, not to mention the capacity to exercise violence, when required” (p.1). The construction of men’s forceful physicality is bound up with representations of heterosexualised masculine sexuality in which men are positioned as active sexual initiators who have the capacity to force sexual attention on women (e.g. McCaughey, 1997).

In relation to this construction of masculine sexuality, women’s bodies are portrayed as lacking force, as vulnerable, and as incapable of challenging male embodied power (e.g. Marcus, 2002). McCaughey and Neil (1995) suggest that these representations of feminine and masculine embodied sexuality are drawn on in sexual violence prevention programmes which serve to (re)produce and normalise men’s physical power to ‘do’ sexual violence and women’s vulnerability to this power. The construction of men’s power to rape and women as unable to prevent this expression of male power can be seen in the following excerpt from Chloe’s account. Here, Chloe discusses what issues might give rise to unwanted sexual attention:

*C: ... Sex is power at the end of the day. You know, I think that's why they rape in the Congo or wherever it is they rape women, because it's the one thing that they can get they can have over us.*

*L: Yeah*

*C: It's a power thing, and I think at the end of the day, they want that, they, you know, they can take it and it's not, I mean, you know, if a woman a woman did it to a man then yes it's the same thing. It's still to do with power but it's not as much if a man does it to a woman. I don't know if that makes sense.*

*L: It does, yeah*

*C: It's more, I think it's more of a power, I think it's such a power thing and at the end of the day they want to have that control. They want to be able to have sex in their ways, control over it*

Here, sexual violence is depicted as a means for ‘doing’ power over the victim

(see also, Kitzinger and Thomas, 1995; Dougherty, 2006). This means of ‘doing’ power is constructed as a specifically heterosexualised relation in which forced intercourse is a masculinised weapon which allows men to physically “take” sex from women. The notion that forced sex is primarily a male preserve is highlighted through the construction of it as “the one thing that they can get they can have over us”. This quote taken together with descriptions of men ‘taking’ sex also provides a sense of men’s physical ability to overpower women.

Men’s physical capacity to ‘do’ power through forced sex and women’s inability to resist rape is further underscored by the positioning of women who are sexually violent to men as less powerful than a comparable man. Implicit but implied in this construction of male recipients and woman initiators is the notion that men are physically equipped with the power to ‘do’ rape but also that this physicality will allow them to resist any force a woman’s body might exert. The implication of this construction is that it is *men* who pose a *sexual threat* and *women* who are *defenceless* against sexual victimisation. This works to reinforce women’s position as passive and men as active in heterosexual relations and offers no possibility for women’s resistance (e.g. Gavey, 1999; Marcus, 2002). The notion of the male body as impervious to physical sexual violence by women can be seen further in Haley’s account:

*L: ... Do you think it’s possible that women can do it to men?  
Give unwanted sexual attention?*

*H: Well I’m not sure... I’m almost inclined to say that I don’t think  
it could happen ... the guy, you know, almost physically in  
every way stronger than a woman so how could a woman pin a  
guy down and do it?*

The constitution of women as physically weaker compared to men casts doubt over the possibility of a woman initiator overpowering a male recipient in practical terms as can be seen in Haley’s question – “how could a woman pin a guy down and do it?” Implied in this account is that men are physically able to overpower women as they are “in every way stronger” in comparison. As with the

above excerpt, the difference drawn around men and women's physical strength in this account works to both (re)produce men's victimisation by women as unlikely and position men as a physical threat to women.

### **9.3     *The sex/emotion distinction – It's only 'natural'***

The notion of sex as a male preserve was not only constructed through reference to men's physical power but also as a fundamentally 'natural' state in which men want/need sex. For example, this can be seen in Gillian's account below:

*L: Okay, so what does the term unwanted sexual attention mean to you?*

*G: Right. Well usually its nasty, gropey men, groping up young women who don't want to be groped, basically what I see it as.*

*L: Yeah*

*G: And I think occasionally it might happen in reverse, but that would be very odd occasion. Whereas I think it's very common for blokes to give unwanted sexual attention to women.*

*L: Why do you think it's less common for it to happen the other way around?*

*G: Because blokes are all bastards and they have testosterone hurtling around their system and think of nothing but sex for 99% of the time and women are more sensible I think*

The gendered relation of men as perpetrators and women as victims is constituted through use of the male sex drive discourse in which men are compelled by 'natural' biological processes to seek heterosexual sex (Hollway, 1984). The universality of these 'male' biological processes serves to depict unwanted sexual attention from men as a "common" phenomenon. The pervasiveness of such behaviour is further highlighted in the use of an extreme case formulation which is used to describe "blokes as *all* bastards".

The male initiator is represented as problematic. He is depicted as irrationally focused on sex as he thinks "of nothing but sex for 99% of the time", which not only contrasts with the more rational "sensible" version of women in this

extract but also with versions of masculinity in which rationality is central (e.g. Whitehead, 2002). This does not suggest that the initiator is feminised by being constituted as irrational or that women are masculinised though being positioned as rational in this account. Rather, the presence of men's extreme sexual interest and women's reduced focus on sex re-inscribe heterosexualised gendered positionings of masculinity and femininity in which 'real men' are active pursuers of hetero-sex (e.g. Gavey, 2005). In contrast women are positioned as passive in sexual exchanges, they have sexual attention imposed upon them and the possibility of women's desire for sex is absent and unarticulated (e.g. Tolman, 2002; Fine, 1988). Indeed, the possibility of women initiators as active seekers of sex is described as rare. This description coupled with the 'naturalness' of men wanting and needing sex serves to locate women initiators of (unwanted) sex as an aberration.

Whilst in this extract unwanted behaviour is problematised in descriptions of men initiators as "nasty gropey" "bastards", the use of the male sex drive discourse works to normalise unwanted sexual attention through its appeal to the 'naturalness' of the behaviour as well as offer little possibility for changing and eradicating 'men's' behaviour. This can be seen further in Gillian's account where she says.

*G: It's quite natural for blokes to fancy younger women because as far as, er, Oh God, carrying on of the species sort of thing.*

*L: oh right yeah*

*G: Um blokes still have sperm, but young, you know, younger women are more likely to produce progeny and so there's this evolutionary whatever the hell I mean.*

*L: Yeah evolutionary yeah*

*G: Yeah, it makes sense for an older bloke to fancy a younger woman whereas older women are less likely to become pregnant makes a lot more sense for older women to you know start crashing about after younger men.*

*L: Yeah*

G: *Um and although it does happen on occasion, um, it just no it doesn't make biological sense. Sorry I've lost my thread again*  
*[laugh]*

L: *[Laugh] No that's fine*

G: *Oh God, but yeah, so I think yes that's part of that happens less often because it's like er confidence comes with age*

L: *Yeah*

G: *so sort of like horrible blokes will wolf whistle whatever [at] younger women because they have the confidence and so forth, whereas with er (.) older women don't want to end up making fools of themselves really because it's perfectly natural for older blokes to want women who are gorgeous.*

L: *Yeah*

G: *Whereas, although it's quite natural for older women to think young blokes are gorgeous, it's in a different sort of way because your not viewing it from a sexual point of view because if you're that age then you've probably already got your kids and stuff, so you're not looking for a sexual partner*

These notions of sexuality can be seen in the ways in which men and women are constructed in Gillian's description. More specifically, men are constructed as active pursuers of women; it is they that 'do' the 'fancying' of women and it is they who will take active steps in communicating sexual interest by 'wolf whistling'. Their positionings as active sexual subjects is naturalised through recourse to their biological need to "carry on the species" which for men can be undertaken at any age because they "still have their sperm" and so "it makes sense" for men to initiate sex.

As is made explicit in Gillian's account, it is not just any woman that will be the recipient of sexual interest. By privileging the reproductive function of sex, it can only be women who appear capable of child bearing, that is, "young women". In addition to this, the discourse of desire described by Lea (2007) is drawn on to construct young women as sexually desirable to heterosexual men through the

reference to them as “gorgeous”. The discourse of desire posits physical attractiveness of the recipient as producing sexual desire in others. By drawing on this discourse, the male initiator’s position as active sexual subject is reinforced in that they ‘do’ the desiring and seek a ‘desirable’ sexual object. The positioning of “young women” as sexually desirable also (re)produces predominant constructions of older women as asexual and sexually unattractive (Fullmer, Shenk and Eastland, 1999)

Biological notions of male and female sexuality are also used to explain why it is that older women cannot be initiators of unwanted sexual attention. Here, it is because they are no longer part of the process of reproduction because they already have “kids” or, as implied by the word “older”, can no longer have children. Since sex for women is governed by the need to reproduce, they no longer need to look for a “sexual partner”. What is absent in this account is the notion of sex as pleasurable for women. It appears that the privileging of the reproductive function of sex makes women’s pleasure in or desire for sex a non-issue.

The ‘male sex drive’ discourse and the discourse of ‘desire’ work to position unwanted sexual attention as ‘normal’ sex. For example, wolf whistling whilst problematised by the description of the initiator as “horrible”, is also normalised by positioning this behaviour as ‘natural’ and biological. In Gillian’s account above, there is a lack of explicit reference to women as victims of unwanted sexual attention and the absence of overt reference to victim identities works to locate sexual harassment as more normalised. However, the implicit circulation of gendered victim/perpetrator positionings in these constructions normalise men as the only ‘true’ sexual aggressor and women as the only ‘true’ victim. Thus, unwanted sexual attention becomes constituted as a heterosexualised relation. The construction of (unwanted) sexual attention as a heterosexualised relation is also evident in Gillian’s discussion of unwanted sexual behaviour in gay relationships:

*G: ... I do understand that a lot of um gay men are far more promiscuous ... men are naturally polygamous and perhaps*

*persuaded to be monogamous because of the connection with the female ... it's probably statistically more common for, you know, gay men to be more promiscuous...so as far as gay blokes are concerned I suppose, yes, if they didn't fancy if a bloke, didn't fancy somebody, suppose that might be just as possible. But yes I think I would be less often that it would be rejected ... because of blokes being sex obsessed and more up for it ... as far as lesbians are concerned ... I would imagine there's less, there would be less, um, unwanted sexual attention because I don't think that, I don't think they'd persevere in the same way because of not having testosterone*

The construction of gay men's sexuality draws on what I will call the 'male sexual need' discourse. This discourse resonates with aspects of the 'male sex drive' discourse in that men are biologically driven to seek sex. However, unlike the 'male sex drive' discourse, this need for sex is not governed by procreation. Instead, within the 'male sexual need' discourse, sex is simply about desire which can be seen in the use of "fancy" in describing men's attraction to other men. This need for sex is not tied to relational or emotional investment in another, and does not need to be, because concern with relationship commitment is constructed as a female preserve.

Hollway's (1989) description of the 'have/hold' relationship discourse is relevant to the construction of the women in this extract. As mentioned in Chapter 1, within the have/hold discourse, women aim to secure a committed, long-lasting relationship with a man. Sex in this discourse becomes imbued with notions around exclusivity, commitment and security. These notions are reflected in this account by the presentation of heterosexual women as concerned with "monogamous relationships" which suggests sex occurs in the context of a lasting relationship. Heterosexual women are also constructed here as regulative of heterosexual men's sexual behaviour in that men are "persuaded to be monogamous because of the connection with the female". This positions women as responsible for men's 'good' behaviour and thus allows them to be blamed if



men behave 'badly' (e.g. Kurth, Spiller and Brown Travis, 2001).

The question of whether gay men can experience unwanted sexual attention is described as an unlikely possibility because the male recipient is also located in the male sexual need discourse and, as such, he is also "sex obsessed and more up for it". As with the use of the male sex drive discourse mentioned above, the use of the male sexual need discourse here locates (unwanted) sexual attention in the realms of 'normal' sex but it also works to undermine claims that gay men can be victims of unwanted sexual attention because, in this discourse, sex is always wanted by men.

Interestingly, lesbian women initiators of unwanted sexual attention are also constructed as an unlikely possibility because they cannot be positioned in the sexual need discourse by virtue of being women. In this account, sexual attention is driven by the distinctly male biological need to have sex. Women lack this biology and so lack this need and because of this they don't "persevere in the same way".

The absence of perpetrators and recipients of unwanted sexual attention and indeed the absence of unwelcome sex itself in gay/lesbian relationships reproduces the notion of unwanted sexual attention as a heterosexualised relation. Indeed, the use of the male sexual need discourse here constitutes men as the only possible initiator because they are driven to seek sex and women as the only possible recipient because they lack this particular need.

The notion that women lack the 'biology' for wanting/needing sex is also discussed in Chloe's account. Instead of wanting/needing sex, women are constructed as 'biologically' geared towards emotional commitment:

*C: Women are more into love and I think than sex, whereas men are more into like the sort of physical bit of it, whereas women will be like oh doesn't he love me, doesn't he want me, you know, they kind of crave that more kind of thing so I think it's different.*

L: *Yeah*

C: *We want more kind of we give off we give off more unwanted emotional*

*[laugh]*

L: *[laugh]*

C: *whereas men give un unwanted sexual I think more than anything else so*

L: *Is the emotional stuff linked to the romance?*

C: *Yeah I think so, yeah. I think we're more romantic than men are I think.*

L: *Yeah*

C: *Men are more kind of geared towards what's in between their legs and yeah, what's in their you know their xxx whereas we kind of give off something that when we have sex it kind of goes off in our brain and then basically it's kind of oh we love you*

Again, we see the ‘male sex drive’ discourse being used to construct men as wanting ‘just’ sex because “men are more kind of geared towards what’s in between their legs”. Women on the other hand are constructed as concerned with “love” and romance and “emotional stuff” rather than ‘just’ sex. This latter construction of women resonates with evolutionary discourses which posit women as ‘naturally’ linking sex with love for a sexual partner because women maximise their chances of reproduction if they can secure a long term commitment from a man (e.g. Burns, 2002; Crouch, 2001). This construction of an evolved gender difference posits men as the only possible initiator of unwanted sexual attention and women as the only possible initiators of “unwanted *emotional*” attention. Constructions of feminine emotionality appear to be integral to constructions of women as ‘improper’ perpetrators and it is this issue that will be explored in more detail next.

#### **9.4    *Emotionality, Femininity & Sexuality***

The constitution of the woman initiator is firmly embedded in particular notions

of ‘deviant’ feminine sexuality within which extreme emotionality and irrationality play a central role. This form of ‘deviant’ feminine sexuality is presented in Kate’s description of the woman initiator of unwanted sexual attention:

*K: It’s more, can I say, bunny boiler?*

*L: [Laugh] Yeah*

*K: It’s more persistent, I love you, I want you, love me back it’s a more, god, desperate. God that’s an appalling word to use yeah it’s, um, it’s less of an activity but more of a lifestyle. I suppose it’s not something that one girl would approach ten girls in one evening, it’s more it would be a genuine fixation with one person*

The term ‘bunny boiler’ is a cultural reference to a scene in the film ‘Fatal Attraction’ in which the female character Alex boils the pet rabbit of the man she is stalking. I will briefly describe some discursive constructions of the character Alex because they are directly relevant to the ways in which the woman initiator is constructed in this interview set. Alex is constructed as an active sexual initiator in that she is portrayed as assertive, sexually ferocious and – at least to begin with – a willing participant in casual sex with a married man (e.g. Siann, 1994). In short, this representation of ‘Alex’ deviates from acceptable sexually passive norms of femininity (e.g. Humpherys, 1992). She is also constructed as obsessive in her desire to form an emotional attachment and develop a committed relationship with this man. Her positioning of ‘active’ ‘pursuer’ is problematised through the construction of her behaviour as unstable, irrational and vengeful (e.g. Humpherys, 1992).

In Kate’s account, the term ‘bunny boiler’ is used to describe lesbian women initiators of unwanted sexual attention. The have/hold discourse is drawn on to (re)produce a distinction between the active lesbian initiator and masculinised active sexual initiation. More specifically, masculinised forms of sexual behaviour are constituted within the male sex drive discourse where the aim of sexual

attention is primarily about securing sexual activity and this might involve approaching “ten girls in one night”. In contrast, lesbian women initiators become located within the have/hold discourse and are positioned as active pursuers of emotional reciprocation and of committed relationships. This can be seen in Kate’s description of women as “desperate” for emotional reciprocation of their “love” from the recipient. Thus, notions of emotion and emotional connection become located as a feminine preserve which works to (re)produce gendered positionings within heterosex – it is women who seek love and men that seek sex.

The positioning of women as agents within sexual relationships is further problematised and undermined through a ‘mental illness’ discourse which positions this need/want for relationship commitment as extreme and pathological. This can be seen in the use of the term ‘bunny boiler’ and the description of active attempts to secure a relationship as a ‘fixation’.

The interweaving of notions of ‘extreme’ emotionality and ‘deviant feminine sexuality’ can further be seen in Philip’s account where he discusses his own experiences of unwanted sexual attention within a professional context. More specifically, Philip works as a carer and describes receiving unwanted attention from a client:

*P: From my own, from my own experiences of that, particularly here in this job, ah, I've had um more than one situation one but one in particular where a young lady was, ah, she came on more than strongly, um and she obviously wanted sexual favours from myself and um it wasn't embarrassing in that sense but it was um (.) it was um, I was very concerned about it because of the ah problems I could have got into and um, it was of a particular concern to myself because of the way she went about it and it was obvious that, you know, the whole thing was planned.*

*L: Um*

*P: Ah, as I say it was a concern and obviously I reported the*

*overall situation to, not only to my manager but also to a counsellor that this young lady had from a previous organisation.*

*L: Yeah*

*P: You know, I flagged it up to them, um, and it was again it was obvious that this particular female was after she, she was it was more attention seeking than anything*

The woman initiator is positioned as a specific ‘type’ of woman – a ‘young lady’. The use of this formulation is interesting here because of its location with the gendered dichotomy of lady/whore. In this context, the description of ‘young lady’ works to *desexualise* her sexual behaviour. The desexualisation of the woman’s behaviour can be seen further in the use of the rather bland non-sexualised description of events as ‘the overall situation’ and in the framing of her actions as ‘attention seeking’.

This construction of the women initiator’s actions resonates with particular aspects of DSM IV classifications of histrionic (formerly hysterical) personality disorder of which it is said that women are more likely to suffer (e.g. Kaplan, 1983). This personality disorder is characterised by a “pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking” and manifests in interaction with others in “inappropriately sexual or provocative behaviour” (Hale and Yudofsky, 2003, p. 819). Characterisations of histrionic personality are interwoven with understandings of normative femininity (e.g. Kaplan, 1983). As Smith-Rosenberg (1972) points out, “for centuries hysteria has been seen as the embodiment of a perverse or hyper femininity” (p. 653). According to Wirth-Cauchon (2001), ‘deviant’ feminine sexuality in which women take up active positionings or transgress particular social norms in relation to sex have been explained in terms of hysteria and its associated extreme emotionality. In Philip’s account, descriptions of the ‘young lady’s’ sexual behaviour is similarly constituted as emotional neediness which is invoked by the use of the term ‘attention seeking’. Thus the woman initiator’s positioning as an active subject is mitigated by

constituting her behaviour as feminised – dependent and emotional.

There is a sense in this particular extract that the woman's behaviour is almost 'nice'. She is described as wanting 'sexual favours' in which there is a sense of reciprocity which can be contrasted to some representations of masculinised sexual violence where physical overpowerment, imposition and invasion of bodily spaces are often central (e.g. Gavey, 2005). The way in which reciprocity features in Philip's account is elaborated in the following extract:

*L: So cos you mentioned sexual favours, could you say bit more about that?*

*P: She wanted to go the whole hog, she wanted sex with me.*

*L: She wanted a relationship as such?*

*P: Yes, yep, and she wanted, if you like, she wanted, she was offering herself, her body er as a favour to me and she would do it because she was saying that she would be a good girl for me*

Here, the woman initiator is firmly embedded within normative notions of feminine sexuality. She is positioned as a commodity for exchange in that her wants and needs are contingent on meeting Philip's sexual desires. She is located as an object of male sexual desire which is emphasised by the noticeable absence of descriptions of her own sexual needs. In this sexual relation she appears to have limited power – she is only active in the sense that she can 'offer herself' (e.g. Gavey, 2005). The constraints around the actions she can take are further emphasised by the description of her as a 'good girl' which positions her as passive, compliant and infantilised which draws attention to her limited power in relation to Philip in this context. These particular feminised positionings serve to construct the woman initiator as non-threatening and undermines her position as an 'active' initiator of sexual relations. This can be further seen in Philip's discussion of why the woman initiator was behaving 'provocatively' towards him:

*P: I think the strain she was under at the time of this, I think it was er self-induced if you like. Cos er she was trying to play two*

*residents off one against the other, um, and I think she was trying to um force an issue with one in particular as to how their relationship would develop. Um, at that particular time he was just, um from all accounts, was just um enjoying himself and um*

*L: With her?*

*P: With her yeah and he didn't put any great store in the relationship that they had. She wanted a lot more from him and so, you know, because of that she was under a lot of strain and I think quite apart from you know the attention aspect with myself I think she wanted also to use me as a, as a extra tool against this the one guy that she really fancied*

Again, the 'have/hold' relationship discourse is drawn on to construct the woman initiator's desire as primarily for a committed relationship. For the woman initiator, sex in and of itself is not the ultimate aim of her interactions with these men. Rather, she is constructed as wanting "more" from one man, wanting this particular relationship to "develop". Her sexual behaviour is thus constructed as a means to an end – the end being a *committed* relationship. In contrast, constructions of the man with whom she wishes to have a committed relationship draws on aspects of the 'male sex drive' discourse in which men are positioned as simply wanting sex. *Sex is not tied to relational and/or emotional investment and is pleasurable in and of itself.* The woman initiator is also located in what I will call the 'feminine wiles' discourse, in which she is positioned as needing to 'bait her man' and does this by using her sexuality to position herself as sexually desirable to other men.

Within these discourses the woman initiator is complexly positioned as active/passive. For example, she is located as a passive object of male sexual interest in the male sex drive discourse but also as an active pursuer of a committed relationship (have/hold discourse) and active social engineer within the feminine wiles discourse. However, despite these positionings, her role as 'active initiator or pursuer' is constructed as unsuccessful in a number of ways – the man

with whom she wants to have a committed relationship sees her as nothing more than a sexual object. Her “planned” attempts of attracting sexual interest from Philip are unwanted and rejected on three occasions, as he says:

*P: “she didn't get the message the first one she didn't get it on the second one when I stated that you know that if it continued I would have no alternative but to give her a warning and on the third occasion um you know as I say I I then reported it to a further counsellor”.*

Thus, in this extract and previous ones outlined above, there is a sense of the woman initiator as desperate and clumsy in her advances which serve to undermine her position as ‘active pursuer’.

Interestingly, in Philip’s account he does not position himself as a ‘victim’ of unwanted sexual attention. As mentioned above, he explicitly states that “it wasn’t embarrassing in that sense” and there is a lack of emotive terms to describe his feelings towards his interactions with the women initiator. This woman’s sexual behaviour is only constituted as a problem in terms of the implications it might have for his professional identity, as he says “*I was very concerned about it because of the ah problems I could have got into*”. It appears that in Philip’s account, actual unwanted sexual attention from the woman initiator, in and of itself, is not a threat and does not constitute him as a ‘proper’ victim. What is, however, a problem is the danger of being falsely accused, as he explicitly states:

*P: Where a female's concerned, it's always, again dependent on rota and whatever, I try to make it with another female member of staff.*

*L: Why is that? Why?*

*P: Why what*

*L: Why um, why with another female member of staff is that?*

*P: Well because of safeguard, because I suppose there's always the danger they could ah, you know, try and turn the situation and possibly they could say, you know ,I've molested them or or*



*whatever. So, you know, as I say I try to be on guard all the time and try and safeguard myself”*

As potentially accused, Philip is positioned not only as a possible victim of women’s lies but also as a possible sexual threat simply through being a man.

This positioning of Philip coupled with constructions of other men in the above extracts work to reinforce particular representations of masculinised sexuality and sexual violence in that men are implicitly or explicitly depicted as wanting sex and that there is always the possibility that they might take it by force. The ways in which the woman initiator is variously constructed throughout this account draw on representations of feminised sexuality: women are not a ‘real’ sexual threat; women want relationship commitment rather than sex *per se* and they are passive objects of male sexual desire. Taken together, these various discourses work to consolidate women as ‘proper’ or ‘true’ victims of sexual violence and men as ‘true’ sexual aggressors.

### **9.5 Not ‘Real’ Women/ Not ‘Real’ Men**

The positions of women as initiators and men as recipients were undermined by constructions of them as falling short of the heterosexual norms for masculinity and femininity. This can be seen in Mike’s account of unwanted sexual attention. Mike begins his discussion of this issue by positioning both men and women as equally capable of giving unwanted sexual attention to the opposite gender:

*M: um it could be one sex picking on another sex I mean whether it be a group of men picking on a single female or a group of females or the other way around*

*L: yeah*

*M: I do think it does happen both ways*

Here, Mike uses the phrase “picking on” to describe a particular set of gendered power relations. The use of this particular phrase draws attention to the power positions in play, that is, an individual or individuals exerting dominance over others. Through this unwanted sexual attention is constituted as about power

rather than sex *per se*. Interestingly, both men and women are positioned as having equal access to this power in that both men and women are constructed as able to dominate members of the opposite sex. The assumption of equality in this account is not unlike versions of gender equity informed by liberal perspectives in which men and women are positioned as equals (e.g. Samuels, 2004; see also Chapter 4 for a full discussion). To demonstrate this, Mike provides the following example:

*M: I've had examples of um, young, sort of, males, young males  
um being intimidated by a group of older women.*

*L: Oh right*

*M: Um, you know, talking about um sex and stuff, him in  
particular and yes it did make him feel very uncomfortable*

*L: You also mentioned mental and physical*

*M: Yes*

*L: could you think of any examples of that?*

*M: Um, well, mental, going back to that last one, the mental, was  
that this kid didn't want to go in to work at the end of it  
because he was he was so, he felt so intimidated by it*

The male recipient is positioned as victimised through the positioning of him as the focus of 'sex talk'. However, the constitution of the male recipient as 'victim' of unwanted sexual attention does not in and of itself present a challenge to the dominant idea of women as 'proper' victims and men as 'sexual aggressors'. This is accomplished through the description of the male recipient as 'young' and as a 'kid'. The infantilisation of the male recipient works not only to draw attention to his vulnerability as a victim but also serves to position him as not *fully* masculine – he is not a *fully grown man*. As with the constructions identified in the previous two sections, a victimisation discourse appears to be in operation through reference to both the recipient's vulnerability as "kid" and feelings of intimidation. However, discourses of victimisation are not explicitly drawn on since he is not described as 'victim'. The representation of the recipient as not fully masculine and the absence of an overt victim identity here work to

(re)produce the notion of masculinity as resistant to victimisation (Epstein, 1997; Lee, 2000).

Just as the above construction of the male recipient does not represent a challenge to conventional heterosexual power relations in which men actively dominate the passive women, in Gillian's account the woman initiator is constructed as falling short of normative femininity:

*G: ... Older women going around chasing men, I mean, possibly they have too much testosterone, because we all have testosterone too and particularly when you get to a certain age your hormones start going berserk ... because your female hormones become less, testosterone levels in comparison are higher ... there was this friend that I worked [with] ... in his twenties, he got chased round the desk when he stayed, when he was the one person that stayed late at work this one night and he got chased round the desk by the cleaner ... who must have been 55 plus ... she wanted sex with him on the desk sort of thing apparently, I mean he may have exaggerated it to make it a funny story ... but he did swear blind that, you know, he dodging round the desk to escape this woman [laugh]*

The construction of the woman initiator is firmly embedded in biological discourses. More specifically, women who take an active role in sex are constructed as menopausal. Dillaway (2005) argues that the menopause is characterised in bio-medical discourses as a dysfunctional state. Indeed, female biology such as menstruation and the menopause have been constructed in dominant discourses as producing psychological deficiency in women, making them behave in irrational and negative ways (e.g. Nicolson, 1995). This construction of the menopause resonates with Gillian's account, in that women are depicted as irrational as implied by the descriptions of their hormones "going berserk".

Menopausal women have also been represented as falling short of being ‘real’ women because femininity is dominantly constructed as synonymous with the ability to bear children (e.g. Ussher, 1989). In Gillian’s description, menopausal women are constructed as increasingly masculinised which is accomplished through reference to the dominance of the ‘male’ hormone relative to “female hormones” in these women. This construction serves to distance ‘real’ feminised women from the position of initiator of sex which in turn undermines women’s position as active sexual beings. In addition to this, the construction of this behaviour as irrational undermines women’s desire for sex and their ability to be sexual initiators of unwanted sexual attention.

What further undermines the notion of women as active sexual subjects is the construction of the “cleaner” as desperate and clumsy in her sexual advances. This is depicted in the description of her chasing him round the desk and the male recipient as “dodging to escape this woman”. Her desperation makes her seem ridiculous in this account and the absurdity of her behaviour is compounded through the construction of her as old. As Fullmer, Shenk and Eastland (1999) point out, older women are seen as both asexual and sexually unattractive. Thus, her status as old makes her sexually undesirable and her active attempts to pursue sex as an aberration as well as hopeless. This image of the woman initiator as ridiculous makes it impossible for the recipient to take her unwanted sexual attention seriously as he is described as recounting it as a “funny story”. This serves to construct the recipient as not a ‘true victim’ of unwanted sexual attention and the woman initiator as not a true perpetrator because she is seen as laughable rather than as a ‘real’ threat.

The construction of male recipients as not ‘real’ men and women initiators as not ‘real women’ is further highlighted in Chloe’s account. Here, men who are victimised by women are portrayed as falling short of normative masculinity and women initiators as falling outside normative femininity:

*L: Can it happen the other way around?*

*C: Yeah, I mean I guess, it's not documented so much as it but you*

*do hear stories of it and I'm sure there are women that probably do it to men. I mean just as you get men who are the aggressor, I'm sure women are the aggressor and I'm sure there are, there are quite a few weak not weak, kind of weakish kind of men out there who do, you know.*

*L: Yeah*

*C: Get preyed upon and will go oh, yeah, ok, and don't know what's happening to them and stuff like that cos we are growing, women are becoming more assertive and knowing what we want and so comes with that the bad things as being aggressive and, you know, dominant I guess, and wanting it really. So yeah, so I guess, I mean I, I've never seen any cases, you know, heard of any particular cases what you hear are sort of men against women but, you know, I guess I'm sure there is so I've read so in magazines [laugh]*

*L: [laugh]*

Here, the notion that men are not victims of unwanted sexual attention is deflected by the use of the disclaimer “but you do hear stories of it”. However, this claim is then undermined by the claim that Chloe has not come across *actual* cases of it which is emphasised by the use of extreme case formulations such as “*never* seen *any* cases or you know heard of *any* particular cases”. What is implied in this account is that cases of female initiators and male recipients have not been reported through legitimate sources; what she describes are “stories” reported in “magazines”. Through the construction of the absence of legitimate sources documenting men as recipients and women as initiators, the notion of men as victims of women’s sexual attention is turned in to fiction.

## **9.6 Woman as Victims?**

As Barter (2006) notes, the construction of women recipients of sexual violence as evidencing either feminine passive or unfeminine active sexual behaviour has been taken as an indicator of the degree to which women are culpable for their own victimisation. More specifically, Richardson and May (1999), argue that

women recipients of gendered violence become constructed as ‘innocent’ victims and ‘undeserving’ victims. Representations of the innocent victim include women who subscribe to traditional feminine behaviours and who modify their own behaviour to protect themselves from male sexual violence. Undeserving women victims, in contrast, behave in a sexually provocative manner towards men and thus make themselves vulnerable to sexual assault by failing to modify their behaviour. In the following section, I will explore the ways in which women’s victimisation becomes interwoven with representations of femininity and deviations from it with a view to exploring how notions of accountability and blame circulate in and through these representations.

### **9.7     *Unruly women?***

According to Gavey (2005), up until the latter part of the twentieth century, rape was predominantly viewed as ‘seduction’ and women who were ‘really’ raped were understood as morally dubious. Gavey (2005) argues that these notions of rape were underpinned by particular, often contradictory, ideas about feminine sexuality. More specifically, Gavey (2005) suggests that “while women were portrayed as sexually passive in relation to men, they were also imbued with a dangerous lurking sexuality that could be invoked in all sorts of ways to explain and justify rape” (p. 19). This potentially active, ‘dangerous’ sexuality becomes interwoven in dominant versions of female ‘provocation’ of male sexual violence which serve to minimise male responsibility for violence (see also Chapter 2). Similar representations of female ‘provocation’ were presented in some participant accounts of unwanted sexual attention. This can be seen in Chloe’s account where she discusses the ways in which particular clothing choices made by women can be read as inviting unwanted sexual attention:

*C: I also think that sometimes, just the kind of way that you look and the kind of things that you might wear, tight huggy clothes or might wear and I know that yeah, you know, in this day where you should be able to wear exactly what you want but at the end of the day if you, if you dress like a tramp or you dress like a tart, people are going to think that you are one and*

*there is it is a society role model and people are going to think she's dressing like that so she's slutty*

*L: yeah*

*C: and it's, you know, so she must be easy so we must be able to give her something, you know what I mean so they give you that unwanted sexual attention which you don't really want. I mean in nowadays people in magazines, there's all these women half naked, half this and that's why they sell ... obviously we're playing straight into the man's hands, we're giving it, you know, and you know, if you wore that I, I respect at the end of the day yes you've still got your mind and your body and everything like that and I might wear it and I wouldn't expect it but you are going to get it*

Webbed through the above excerpt is the notion that active feminine sexuality is problematic as can be seen in the derogatory expressions used to describe it such as “tramp”, “tart” and “slut”. Within this construction, the so called “easy” woman is agentic in the sense that she can chose to seek sexual attention but her positioning as an active agent is constrained in that she becomes located as a sexual object for men. There is a sense here that once a woman is positioned as “easy” she becomes sexually available to all men and that men’s (unwanted) sexual behaviour towards her is permissible. The pejorative descriptions of active feminine sexuality here reinscribe the lady-whore dichotomy mentioned earlier with passive feminine sexuality being implicitly constituted as uninviting of unwanted sexual attention because the passive women does not actively seek out sexualised responses from men.

Importantly, women’s clothing is constructed as an indicator of the location of women as “easy” and is seen as provocative of men’s unwanted sexual behaviour. In Chloe’s account, the notion that revealing clothes is synonymous with being a “tramp”, “tart” or “slut” is common knowledge as implied by the construction of “people” thinking it. Since this is common knowledge, women are positioned as *choosing* to sexually objectify themselves and, as such, they should know that

they are “going to get” sexual attention. Thus, it is women’s choices – women’s behaviours – which provoke unwanted sexual attention. In addition to this, women are constructed as being complicit in men’s sexual objectification of them at a broader societal level which can be seen in the presentation of women in magazines as “half naked” and is described as “playing straight in to the man’s hands”. Women are thus at least partially accountable for their objectification and sexual victimisation.

Within Chloe’s account, the point is made that it is not simply clothing preference which give rise to unwanted sexual attention. More specifically, Chloe describes the ways in which particular expressions of active feminine sexuality open up possibilities for non-consensual sexual activity in heterosexual encounters:

*C: There's such a fine line between giving consent ... the thing with giving consent, you know, one minute you're like yeah yeah yeah and the next minute, you know, no, but then you've got the you've got the, depends on the situation I guess, but there is, you know, there's particular behaviours of like if you're rubbing yourself up against a guy and you're wanting you know and then you think no, then you know poor guy you've led him on completely and guys are ruled by what's in between their pants that's it*

*L: [laugh]*

*C: and, you know, when it but if you're not doing anything say like a guy just follows you home and you're you know then, you know, it's more severe than say your actually giving it giving him everything and being a bit of a cocktease, you know what I mean*

Women’s sexuality is portrayed as changeable and capricious which makes the consent rule a somewhat arbitrary yardstick with which to judge whether activities were ‘just’ sex or violence. Men’s sexuality on the other hand is constructed through the male sex drive discourse as a barely controllable ‘urge’. It is implied



that men might have difficulty stopping their sexual response once started because “guys are *ruled* by what’s in between their pants”. Implied in this account is that the unpredictability of feminine sexuality is dangerous for men. Women’s consent to sex is depicted as unreliable and this coupled with the construction of the difficulties men experience controlling sexual urges once aroused (re)positions male initiators of rape as victims of feminine whims.

The unpredictability of active feminine sexuality is constructed as worthy of insult as can be seen from the use of the derogatory expression “cocktease”. Here, the word “cocktease” highlights women’s role in provoking unwanted sexual attention from men. More specifically, it draws attention to the ways in which women’s sexual behaviour can be read as implicit consent when they give “him everything”. However, central to the use of the word “cocktease” here is that implicit consent is later withdrawn. Thus, women positioned as provoking men’s uncontrollable sexuality through engaging in unpredictable sexual behaviour become located within notions of accountability and become more blameable for experiences of unwanted sexual attention. In contrast, women positioned as passive rather than active, women that can be described as “not doing anything” become positioned as unaccountable, less blameworthy, and their experiences of unwanted sexual attention located as “more severe” because they did not ‘provoke’ men’s sexual behaviour. Notions of female provocation and accountability were also drawn on in Haley’s account during a discussion of why men give unwanted sexual attention to women:

*H: I think you would have to be leading someone on to make them want to push you and get that idea in their head ... if you’re giving them attention and you’re flirting with them and your putting ideas in their head then, but you’re not interested at all then ... that could really frustrate them, make them angry and that’s when I’ve only heard like in papers and from talking to people then that’s when people do turn and get really vicious and aggressive*

Here, “attention” and “flirting” are constructed as indicators of sexual interest, as markers for the likelihood of sexual activity occurring and of implied consent. Women are positioned as contradictory – their behaviour does not match their intention because they are “flirting with them” but they are “not interested at all” in engaging in sexual activity with the man in question. The act of flirting is constructed as setting up men’s expectations for subsequent sexual activity. Importantly, it is women who put “ideas in their head” which positions them as at least partially accountable and blameable as they play an active part in setting up the possibilities for the manifestation of unwanted sexual attention. More specifically, women’s active sexuality coupled with contradictory positions taken up by women in this context is depicted as provoking men’s aggressive sexual behaviour. Men, when provoked, are portrayed as a threat to women; they become “angry”, they might “turn and get really vicious and aggressive”. However, in this account, men are constructed both as passive in the sense that they respond to women’s active sexual behaviour and as active in the sense they may force sexual attention when implicit consent is withdrawn. Thus men are complexly positioned as both sexual aggressors and victims of active, contradictory feminine sexuality. In this way, women’s active, contradictory sexuality is (re)produced as dangerous for both the initiator and recipient. By “leading someone on”, women run the risk of provoking men’s sexual aggression which implies that the recipient plays an active part not only in their own victimisation but also in positioning men as perpetrators of sexual violence.

As mentioned above, women positioned within what I will call the ‘contradictory sexuality discourse’ are depicted as at least partially culpable for their experiences of unwanted sexual attention. This can be seen in further Haley’s account:

*H: I think sometimes you do get girls who are stupid and do lead guys on and give them the wrong idea, and, you know, an sometimes do even offer it and when it comes to it they say no. So I think you can get some girls who have been stupid like that um*

*L: yeah*

*H: and I don't think they should you know imply it or give off the impression that they want it if they don't want it, um, cos I think they've then got themselves in a position with, like you've made your bed your gonna have to lie in it*

As with the above excerpts from Haley and Chloe's account, women located in the contradictory sexuality discourse provoke unwanted sexual attention from men by implicitly or explicitly giving consent to sexual activity. In this account, setting up such expectations within heterosexual encounters is constituted as risky; in engaging in contradictory sexual behaviour, women are "putting themselves in a position" where the occurrence of sexual activity has been implicitly or explicitly agreed upon. It appears that once such agreement has been made it is not easily reneged upon. Thus, by engaging in contradictory behaviour, women appear to give up rights to withdraw consent and can be positioned as "stupid" for engaging in risky behaviour. What appears to underpin the construction of women's sexual activity is the agreement made with men. The giving or withholding of consent becomes constituted not in relation to the presence or absence of women's desire to have sex but in relation to whether an implicit or explicit agreement has been made with a man.

The construction of women 'provoking' unwanted sexual attention renders them accountable and blameable for expression of men's unwanted sexual attention. Here, there is a sense that the 'accountable' woman is less deserving of sympathy. Instead, women are described here as having "made their bed, your gonna have to lie in it". Since women are constructed as "putting themselves in a position" where men expect sex, they are positioned as having to expect and deal with possible negative repercussions of their contradictory sexual behaviour. The portrayal of women located in the contradictory sexuality discourse as less deserving of sympathy is stated more explicitly in Chloe's account below:

*C: people who cry rape, like cry wolf and it didn't really happen then I, I don't have the least bit of sympathy for them and people who say consented to, not consented, but have*

*consensual sex and then say oh I didn't consent to sex, I don't feel sorry for either cos I think at the end of the day you consented at the first place and you've screwed the guys head up, and you, you know what I mean, like you're not playing fair game here kind of thing um but people who have been raped I do feel incredibly sorry for and I think, you know, I wouldn't wish that on anybody cos it's a violation*

Here, women located in the contradictory sexuality discourse are described as not deserving of sympathy because they are “not playing fair game”. As mentioned above, these women are constructed as setting up an implicit or explicit agreement with a man to engage in sexual activity and by reneging on this agreement they are positioned as not being “fair”. Thus, by provoking unwanted sexual attention, these women are positioned as accountable and at least partially blameable for their victimisation. Interestingly, these women are distinguished from people “who have been raped”. Implicit in this construction is that the unwanted sexual experiences of women located in the contradictory sexuality discourse falls short of ‘real’ rape. Thus, these women are positioned as not ‘true’ or ‘proper’ victims of unwanted sexual attention. It seems that for a woman to be positioned as a ‘true’ or ‘proper’ victim of ‘real’ rape they must avoid displaying active and contradictory forms of sexuality prior to the manifestation of unwanted sexual attention.

Alongside women located in the contradictory sexuality discourse, individuals who make false claims about experiences of unwanted sexual attention are similarly constructed as problematic. This can be seen in the following excerpt from Chloe’s account where we discuss the reasons why people might “cry wolf”:

*L: why do you think people cry wolf?*

*C: because I think sometimes like, cases like Mike Tyson when he raped that woman. He didn't actually rape her and she says oh yeah I was raped and all that kind of stuff, and I think I, you know, I mean certain TV programmes they always say it I*

*think some women do it after they done it with a guy and go oh yeah but they didn't consent and I think you know sometimes it's like either out of guilt, or either out of, they've got they've got a husband or they've something, something that's triggered it and I think at the end of the day they've they've cried wolf they've kind of, you know, they've said oh I was raped, I was raped but they weren't*

*L: yeah*

*C: so in the end you know they've looked like I dunno the word they've looked like a a dick I guess whatever you know what I mean... they look like somebody who hasn't, you know, who something and no-one's gonna believe them again, you know, if they go out in exactly the same or a similar thing and they've actually got raped and it's yeah but I got raped yeah but you got raped before and then it turned out to be ... a crock of shit*

*L: yeah*

*C: at the end of the day you've blown your chances I think and ... you've ruined it for other people who were raped*

In this construction of women that “cry wolf”, rape is used by women to deflect blame for ‘bad’ behaviour such as adultery. The reference to guilt in this extract resonates with Weihofen’s (1959) claim that women may experience guilt after consensual activity and may re-label the act as rape partially because women consciously or unconsciously want their partner to be aggressive and dominant during sex and also because the label of ‘rape’ allows women to avoid derogatory comments about her ‘active’ sexual behaviour. As Gavey (2005) points out, underlying such constructions of women’s rape accusations is an image of women’s sexuality as active but constrained by social norms of passive feminine sexuality. In this extract, this kind of sexuality is dangerous to men because women will need to ‘blame’ them for sex to appear to be in line with required norms of femininity. The danger of this kind of femininity is emphasised by the suggestion that deflecting blame through ‘lies’ is not only dangerous for men but

also for ‘real’ victims of rape.

### **9.8     *Summary***

The gendered dynamic between initiators and recipients presented here appears to reflect and reinforce heterosexist positionings of the feminine as passive and the masculine as active. Importantly, discourses of victimisation often appear to work implicitly in the constructions identified above. As discussed above, victimisation discourses position sexually violent acts as non-normative and the absence of overt reference to victim identities works to locate unwanted sexual attention as more normalised. However, the implicit circulation of victim/perpetrator positionings in these constructions normalise men as the only ‘true’ sexual aggressor and women as the only ‘true’ victim. However, to constitute a ‘true’ victim, women must conform to normative notions around passive feminine sexualities.

As noted in Chapter 1, predominant association of both femininity and victimhood with passivity functions to reinforce images of women victims as powerless. As can be seen in the above constructions, this serves to constrain articulation of agentic sexual subjectivities for women as well as possibilities for resistance against sexual harassment. Similarly, the representation of masculine sexuality as always-already active leaves little room for men to withhold consent or acknowledge personal victimisation.

In the next chapter, I draw together arguments made across this thesis. In doing so, I attempt to articulate possible spaces in which the heterosexualisation of victim-perpetrator positionings within constructions of unwanted sexual attention could be destabilised. As argued in Chapter 1, the positioning of feminine sexualities as passive in relation to active masculine sexualities (re)produces a set of power relations which contribute to the perpetuation of sexual harassment (see also Lee, 2000; Gavey, 2005). The purpose of this examination is to explore how the expression of active femininised and passive masculinised positionings may contribute to the unsettling of the conditions which give rise to sexual harassment.

## Chapter 10: Joe's Story

### *10.1 Overview*

In drawing together the main arguments made in this thesis, I would like to begin by recounting a story which in some ways embodies the core preoccupations which faced me as I worked with and framed this thesis. During the time I was writing my initial proposal for this project, an acquaintance – “Joe” – described the difficulties he was having in managing his friend “Sarah’s” sexual advances towards him. He felt that Sarah’s behaviour had for some time crossed the line from friendliness to more overt flirtation but the subtlety of her sexualised behaviour towards him made it hard for him to find a way to communicate the unwantedness of her actions. On one occasion, Sarah stayed overnight at Joe’s house. He made up a bed for her in the living room after which he went to his own bedroom to sleep. During the night Joe awoke to find Sarah performing a sex act on him. What struck me about Joe’s story was his ambivalence in relation to his experience. On the one hand, he was upset by it, seeing it as intrusive and abusive, but on the other hand, he also seemed aware that this would be framed socially as something that men ‘should’ like, that a man would be ‘lucky’ to have a woman do this to them. There was a sense that the feeling/being abused and being a man were incommensurable for Joe, making it difficult for him to find a label for his experience.

This story highlights how multiple issues impact and complexify the process of drawing boundaries around and distinguishing between ‘normal’ experiences and gendered/sexualised violence. As Joe’s story illustrates, the multiple ways in which gendered/sexualised experiences can become constituted open up as well as preclude particular positionings for those involved. This aspect of Joe’s description of his experience resonates with the broad concerns of this project. More specifically, I have explored how a diversity of issues become relevant, included and excluded in the constitution and (re)production of phenomena as sexual harassment with a view to unpacking the implications that particular versions of sexual harassment have for recipients and initiators. Central to this exploration has been the predominant conceptualisation of the term ‘sexual harassment’ as integral to victim resistance against manifestations of

gendered/sexualised power relations. I have not only attempted to explore various constructions of what sexual harassment is and what it is not in terms of how they may enable or disable challenges to be made against problematic power relations but also I have interrogated the predominant assumption around the positioning of sexual harassment as crucial for resistance to take place. More specifically, this project has examined how representations of sexual harassment as a strategy for resistance often work to privilege it over other means of problematising behaviour.

This thesis considered a series of questions raised by the privileging of sexual harassment as a tool for resistance which included: what versions of sexual harassment constitute a crucial challenge to power relations? What forms of resistance are made possible by particular versions of harassment? In what ways do strategies other than sexual harassment enable or constrain challenges to be made? How are recipient-initiator relations framed and constituted by versions of sexual harassment and strategies of resistance to it? What are the implications of problematising and/or subordinating strategies other than sexual harassment for recipients who have drawn on them to make sense of experiences?

Central to addressing these questions has been the analysis of the operation of normalised notions of gender in sexual harassment discourses. A key argument running through this project has been concerned with how the gendering of various aspects of the construct of sexual harassment can work to (re)produce, naturalise and stabilise dichotomous, gendered versions of femininities and masculinities. I have attempted to explicate the ways in which the constitution of the feminine (as for example, powerless, passive, caring, emotional) and the masculine (as for example, powerful, active, aggressive, rational) within constructions related to the above broad issues can work in various ways to (re)produce normative gendered power relations in which the feminine is positioned as subordinate to the masculine. This in turn has implications for the construction of sexual harassment itself, in the sense that normative gender assumptions frame the constitution of recipient and initiators as feminised and



masculine respectively.

Throughout this project, I have attempted to draw attention to the ways in which these power differentials operating in the construction of gender binaries not only open up possibilities for the manifestation of sexual harassment but also become intertwined and (re)produced in a myriad of ways in conceptualisations of the construct of sexual harassment as a tool for resistance against gendered/sexualised power. To contextualise these points, I seek to trace a path through the main arguments made in the preceding chapters with a view to highlighting key theoretical, methodological and practical implications of this thesis. In doing so, I will reflexively consider and make explicit how my own gendered assumptions about sex, sexuality and sexual harassment not only framed the processes of knowledge production undertaken in this thesis but also how particular stories, like Joe's, impacted and shaped my ideas.

## ***10.2 Politicising Gendered Experiences: Examining the Problem of Resistance***

What has been of central concern to my examination of sexual harassment as a mechanism for resistance is the predominant framing of it within academic, policy and popular discourses as a political strategy developed by and for *women* – it “is a word invented as part of women’s renaming of the world, reflecting and constructing *women’s* experiences and labelling a form of behaviour newly recognised as something which women need not passively endure but can actively protest against and resist” (Kitzinger and Thomas, 1995: p. 32). As Brewis and Linstead (2001) note in relation to research on this issue, “although many commentators do make the effort to state that harassment is not something which exclusively happens to women, to acknowledge that harassers and recipients can be of either gender, it would be inaccurate to say that ... [sexual harassment] discourse actually succeeds in producing harassment as a non-gendered phenomenon” (p. 84). Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that within such descriptions it is *women* who take centre stage, not only as victims but also as possible agents of resistance against *male* violence.

The feminisation of both victimisation and resistance in sexual harassment discourses was the primary focus of Chapter 2. Debates were highlighted which drew attention to how victim status can both function as a tool for resistance and work to stabilise problematic gendered power relations. For example, whilst victim status can work to undermine normalising constructions of masculinised sexual dominance and (re)positions such acts as violence, its connotations with weakness and powerlessness may also (re)produce normative versions of femininities as passive and masculinities as active. I argued that the (re)production of such gendered assumptions may contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence. For example, normative gendered active/passive positionings may maintain the conditions under which extreme versions of gendered dominance/subordination are made possible (Gavey, 2005).

Threaded through Chapter 2 was a discussion of how the importance accorded to victim status within conceptualisations of resistance has turned scholarly attention to (women) recipients who do not challenge experiences using the construct of sexual harassment. I argued that the focus on recipient non-labelling of experiences as ‘sexual harassment’ coupled with the notion of it as crucial to resistance has worked to dichotomise women recipients as either challenging or failing to resist manifestations of gendered/sexualised power. It was noted that the latter women were variously problematised within a body of work as, for example, normalising expressions of gendered power, ‘failing’ to understand the concept of sexual harassment and as needing assistance to recognise it. As Brewis and Linstead (2000) contend, “the female subject is constituted [within such academic and policy accounts] ... as helpless in the face of such attention ... there is a certain ‘hysterization’ of female sexuality, a construction of this sexuality as peculiarly, even pathologically vulnerable” (p. 89). I argued that not only do such constructions run the risk of reproducing women as fragile, powerless and vulnerable but also that the focus on women as ‘failing’ to perform resistance as prescribed in these accounts allows women recipients to be positioned as responsible and/or accountable for the continuation of sexual harassment.

Important to note is that in the process of examining the above issues raised by

particular representations of non-labelling, I have not argued that experiences recounted as something other than sexual harassment are in some way unproblematic. Throughout this thesis, I recognise and have explored versions of gendered experiences that locate sexual harassment as, for example, normal and/or trivial work to maintain problematic relations of dominance/subordination. That said, I have expressed caution about homogenising the phenomenon of ‘non-labelling’ as representative of some form of acceptance of gendered/sexualised power. In a similar vein, I have argued that conceptualising the deployment of the construct of sexual harassment as resistance may distract attention away from the ways in which versions of sexual harassment can work to stabilise and maintain particular relations of power that it seeks to counter. It is these complexities that I have attempted to express and work with in this thesis.

In Chapter 3, the discussion moved to how sexual harassment as a tool for resistance may translate into practical challenges against problematic behaviour in the form of legal and policy regulation. Here, I explored how normative notions of masculinities and femininities become interwoven in resolution strategies and can work to both (re)produce gendered power relations and inhibit the uptake of legal and policy ‘solutions’. I began by unpacking constructions of gendered equality underpinning sexual discrimination laws. In early laws, it was noted that liberal conceptualisations of men and women as equal posited behaviours which could be directed at both men and women as gender-neutral and not sexually harassing. It was argued that such conceptualisations overly simplified gendered power relations and ignored how the impact of behaviours can have differential gendered consequences and implications for men and women.

We also saw how the constitution of an experience as discrimination in both law and workplace policy (for example, the reasonable person test, ‘formal’ components of grievance procedures) draw on masculinised norms of ‘appropriate’ conduct which has the potential to reproduce the prioritisation of idealised masculine identities over the feminised other. In relation to grievance processes, it was argued that masculinised bias operating in procedures may function to discourage women from using them. However, the adoption of

‘women-sensitive’ approaches (for example, the reasonable woman test, informal grievance policies) is predicated on notions of fundamental gender differences and as such reproduces the feminised other as fragile, powerless and in need of special protection. As with the preceding chapter, the point was made that the (re)production of the feminine in various ways as normatively subordinate to the masculine may work to make possible extreme versions of gendered dominance/subordination underpinning instantiations of sexual harassment.

As I examined the issues raised in the literature around legal/formalised strategies of resistance, I considered instantiations of gendered/sexualised experiences of power which do not easily lend themselves to the enactment of formal procedures. This prompted me to ask the question of how recipients can tackle such behaviour when these grievance routes are not easily open to them. In both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, I noted that women have been described as dealing with such behaviours in various ways such as avoiding initiators, ignoring behaviour and/or deflecting and/or (re)constituting power relations as, for example, humour. Such strategies are often positioned in the literature as falling short of resistance, as being complicit with behaviour, as normalising or at least ‘failing’ to draw attention to the seriousness of the problem. Whilst the contextualisation of some strategies in some instances may well be limited in the challenge that they offer to harassing behaviour, I would argue there is a tendency in some of these academic accounts to implicitly position the women that use these strategies as the problem. Importantly, within this literature there is not a clear sense of how other forms of resistance can be done in the absence of legal/formal remedy. In this thesis, I have attempted to move away from these implicit assumptions to ask questions about what kind of cultural understandings are in circulation about how sexual harassment should be dealt with. What are the implications of these constructions? What barriers are there to dealing with sexual harassment in the context of people’s lives? Whilst I make no claims to have devised a set of ‘fool-proof’ practical steps to deal with sexual harassment, I will, however, consider later on in this chapter how some of the analytical focuses of this thesis may point to areas which open up possibilities for action against sexual harassment other than formal

regulation.

### ***10.3 The Practical Production of this thesis***

In the preceding sections, I have discussed how instantiations of normative assumptions around femininity as other to masculinity are not only implicated by a body of work as central to the construction and maintenance of sexually harassing behaviour but often also become interwoven and (re)constituted in the research of it as a problem. This highlights the pervasiveness of and difficulties around negotiating problematic gendered discourses when producing knowledges around gender in general and sexual violence in particular. In the production of this thesis, I have reflectively engaged with how Othering processes, including those around gender and sexuality have variously impacted and shaped this thesis and considered how such processes can be disrupted.

In Chapter 4, I considered how the broad theoretical, methodological and topic focus of this project (feminist, qualitative and ‘sensitive’) has occupied a marginal, Othered position within the broader institution of psychology. The Othering of non-mainstream work has not only worked to throw doubt on the legitimacy of such research but also to minimise practical research concerns that arise in marginal areas of study. As a case in point, I considered how the British Psychological Society’s ethical guidelines prioritise theoretical and methodological concerns of mainstream work which often do not capture the complexities of ethical issues arising in the aforementioned marginalised areas of research. To illustrate this point, I discussed debates highlighting the difficulties around negotiating power dynamics when researching participants variously positioned as Other to the researcher. To draw attention to the complexities of such power relations in this project, I described how I was located in Othered feminised positions when working with some male participants but also how I Othered LGBT participants by not engaging sufficiently with unequal power relations produced by my heterosexualised positioning. This chapter argues that there is no easy way to ‘solve’ unequal power relations when researching Others. Rather it is through continual reflective engagement with Othering processes that come into play during research that spaces for potential disruption of these

processes can be explored.

Following on from the above reflexive consideration of Othering in the research processes, Chapter 5 elaborates on specific issues concerning marginality, Othering and Power during discussion of specific methodological stances and considerations taken up in this project. The first half of this chapter focused on the use of Q methodology in this thesis. In this description of Q methodology, I discuss its marginal position within both quantitative and qualitative research. I argue that its non-hypothetico-deductive position coupled with conceptualisations of it as generating narratives composed of manifold discourses align this methodology with qualitative research traditions. It is this conceptualisation of Q methodology that is drawn on in this thesis. I argued that Q methodology's ability to move away from polarised understandings of an issue and to focus on more marginal as well as dominant cultural narratives make it particularly suited to address questions and concerns outlined earlier around boundary construction of how phenomena become constituted or precluded within constructions of sexual harassment as well as multiple constructions of sexual harassment policy. The practicalities of each Q study (Chapter 6 and Chapter 8) were outlined and explained.

The second half of Chapter 5 outlined and justified the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis of interview data collected. I discuss the ways in which notions of disciplinary power, agency and resistance can be conceptualised within a Foucauldian discursive framework and how I have used these particular notions to unpack the productive effect of discourses and gendered/sexualised power – resistance dynamics therein in relation to constructions of sexual harassment explored in interview data (Chapters 7 and Chapter 9). I then provided a description of procedural aspects employed in the collection of the interview data. During this discussion, I flagged up specific instantiations of power relations within the researcher-participant relationship. I highlighted the shifting nexus of power along a number of fault-lines including age, experience and occupational status and the ways in which these instances framed particular aspects of specific

research encounters.

As noted at the beginning of this section, my purpose of building in this reflective commentary was to draw attention to how this project not only ‘speaks of’ problematic power relations but also becomes enmeshed in them. I have sought to draw attention to both the difficulties around negotiating power relations in the production of this work and attempted to resist the (re)production of particular forms of power through sustaining politicised engagement in my analysis of these issues and reflection on them.

#### ***10.4 Synopsis of Analytical Chapters***

In this thesis, four analytical chapters were presented. In this section, I will provide a synopsis of each chapter before moving on to consider the intersecting implications and applications of each set of analyses.

The first of the analytical chapters presented in this project – Chapter 6 – used Q methodology to explore the ways in which a diversity of issues and considerations that may become relevant to constructions of behaviours as ‘sexual harassment’. In this study, 10 narratives were identified, all of which drew different boundaries around the issue of what does/does not count as sexual harassment. In relation to a body of work on labelling behaviour, I argued that the implicit polarisation of labelling/non-labelling behaviour in the literature does not capture the complexities of the ways in which the construct of sexual harassment is used in this cultural context. Indeed, in some of the narratives, problematisation of specific behaviours occurred in the absence of the term ‘sexual harassment’. Given this, Lee’s (2001) suggestion for extending the vocabulary of problematic gendered behaviour may well have some purchase in terms of providing recipients with the means to problematise behaviour in ways which resonate with their experiences of it (see also Chapter 1). As we saw above, the predominant problematisation of individuals, particularly women, who do not use the label, runs the risk of stigmatising recipients and possibly alienating them from support systems. Therefore an extension of the gendered violence vocabulary could represent an important step towards providing recipients with a means to make

sense of experiences in ways which fit in to the context of their lives.

It is important to note that I am not idealising the narratives identified here. As noted in Chapter 6, some narratives could be read as problematic in terms of the gendered assumptions drawn on in these stories of sexual harassment. However, I have argued that it is equally important to subject the use of the term 'sexual harassment' to critical scrutiny as it is to explore the absence of the phrase in accounts. The implicit assumption of labelling as 'good' in some research discussed above can function to distract attention away from problematic gendered assumptions which may become interwoven in constructions of experiences as 'sexual harassment'.

The focus on boundary construction is continued in Chapter 7 with an exploration of how the public-private dichotomy is deployed to (re)produce sexual harassment as an impermissible infraction of the formal relations in the public sphere and as a permissible problem in private relationships. More specifically, constructions of the workplace as a formalised, hierarchically organised arena allow gendered/sexualised behaviour to be framed as an abuse of superior employment status and/or inappropriately 'personalised' behaviour. However the construction of the workplace as an increasingly personalised sphere (re)produced sexual harassment as a 'permissible problem', that is, a behaviour that is permissible in personal relationships and a problem when these personal relationships are located in and require sensitivity to formal professionalism.

Sexual harassment as a 'permissible problem' was further articulated in constructions of it in the personal sphere, outside of the workplace. Here, dealing with sexual harassment is constituted as risky because initiation of such behaviour locates the recipient as responsible for negotiating it in a manner which is sensitive to a number of considerations such as the impact of rejection on the initiator, on their personal relationship and the wider social network of which they are a part. It was noted that these constructions are embedded within heteronormative practices of sexualised activity. Here, the recipient becomes feminised in that sexual refusal becomes intertwined with being "collective,



caring and relational” which represent idealised standards of the feminine woman (Burns, 1999). The initiator, on the other hand, was variously represented as pursuer – a position associated with masculinised sexual initiation. These initiator positionings work to locate instances of sexual harassment as part and parcel of the normal albeit problematic implications of communicating sexual interest.

In Chapter 8, I focused more extensively on representations of how sexual harassment should be dealt with through the analysis of nine policy narratives generated in the second Q methodological study I conducted. Here, I attempted to articulate problems/barriers to dealing with sexual harassment opened up by specific narratives. Of particular interest were the ways in which narratives opened up possibilities for secondary victimisation as this has been identified as a significant barrier to challenging sexually harassing behaviour (see also Chapter 2 and Chapter 3).

It is important to note that I am not arguing that responses to recipients of sexual harassment are uniformly negative or polarised. Instead, I explored the complexity of responses to both victims and perpetrators in sexual harassment policy narratives. For example, the absence of an overt victim-sensitive approach in some of the other narratives did not preclude the inclusion of victim-orientated practices. This is not to say that some indication of alignment with the victim is entirely unproblematic. We saw how emphasis on practices designed to protect the victim from emotional upset can function to (re)produce versions of femininity in which women victims are constructed as fragile and passive. Moreover, sympathy for the victim and/or a rejection of victim-blaming practices does not necessarily mean that secondary victimisation is not in operation in particular ways. For example, the notion of ‘crying wolf’ was raised as a significant issue in various ways across the majority of narratives. I argued that the continued doubt of the truthfulness of complaints opens up the possibility of (re)positioning victims as perpetrators and perpetrators as victims which may act as a barrier to reporting instances of sexual harassment.

In Chapter 9, the exploration of representations of victims and perpetrators shifts

from policy constructions to broader sexual harassment discourses drawn on in interview data. Here, I explicate the productive effect of the predominant construction of sexual harassment as a *heterosexualised* relation, as something that is done by men to women. More specifically, I unpacked the ways in which versions of active masculine and passive feminine hetero-sexualities were deployed in a range of constructions of men/women, women/men and same sex victims/perpetrators, to produce women as ‘true’ victims and men as ‘true’ ‘perpetrators’ of sexual harassment. I also explored how ‘deviations’ from normative gendered sexualities such as active feminine sexualities are used to present women as ‘improper’ perpetrators and men as ‘improper’ victims.

Taken together, these versions of sexual harassment worked in concert to (re)produce heterosexualised power positionings of the feminine as passive and the masculine as active. Importantly, discourses of victimisation appear to be in implicit operation. As discussed above, victimisation discourses position sexually violent acts as non-normative and the absence of overt reference to victim identities works to locate sexual harassment as more normalised. However, the implicit circulation of victim/perpetrator positionings in these constructions normalise men as the only ‘true’ sexual aggressor and women as the only ‘true’ victim.

### ***10.5 Shifting ‘Sex’: Joe’s Story***

The heterosexualisation of victim-perpetrator relations discussed in the final analytical chapter of this thesis, in many ways, reflects and resonates with the gendering of resistance within sexual harassment discourses discussed at the beginning of this chapter. As mentioned earlier, in this project, I have pointed to a number of potential difficulties faced by women that become produced and reproduced through gendered constructions of resistance and victim – perpetrator relations therein. I have argued that such constructions of resistance to sexual harassment can work to position women within problematic notions of femininity in general and feminised victimisation in particular. Importantly, they can also function to displace perpetrator responsibility for problematic behaviour through

the shift in emphasis to women's accountability in the process of resistance.

The gendering of victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment not only throws up difficulties for women recipients but also makes it difficult to create space for experiences of sexual harassment that deviate from this gendered pattern of recipient-initiator relations. As Brewis and Linstead (2000) note, this is reflected in the ways in which sexual harassment is routinely (re)produced as a particular kind of gendered phenomenon in sexual harassment literature – “the use of the female third person pronoun when referring to recipients of harassment is so widespread in the discourse as to almost escape detection. Same sex harassment also tends to be ignored” (p. 86). In some ways, the difficulties around the lack of space for ‘alternative’ gendered/sexualised configurations of victim-perpetrator relations are illustrated by Joe's story. The difficulties I described above that Joe expressed in making sense of his experience seems to point to the ways in which this gendering of sexual harassment as a tool for resistance may constrain articulation of more passive versions of masculinised sexual subjectivities as well as agentic sexual subjectivities for women.

In a similar vein to Gavey (2005), I would argue that opening up spaces which allow for active feminine and passive masculine sexualities may well have transgressive potential in terms of unsettling heteronormative power dynamics in which the feminine is subordinated in various ways in the masculine. As noted throughout this project, the normativity of this power relation may maintain the conditions under which extreme versions of gendered dominance/subordination are made possible. One potential site for deconstructing this gendered power relation may lie in the troubling of the heterosexualisation of sexual harassment discussed in Chapter 9. More specifically, to move past problematic versions of feminine passivity and masculine agency, it seems pertinent to question the construction of women as always-already ‘true’ victims and men as ‘true’ perpetrators. The exploration of spaces where femininity and victimhood are decoupled in accounts of sexual violence may have transgressive potential. For example, whilst constructions of male victimisation presented in Chapter 9 (re)produce heteronormative versions of masculine and feminine sexualities, there

may also be potential space within such accounts for the articulation of passive versions of masculine sexualities – a space where recipients such as Joe could withhold consent and/or clearly acknowledge personal victimisation. It should be noted that I am not arguing for a gender-neutral approach to be taken to the problem of passivity. As illustrated in the analysis in Chapter 9, non-typical versions of victim/perpetrator relations do not imply that a gender-neutral power relation is in operation. Rather, I would argue that a shift in research focus to the exploration of a range of gendered/sexualised victim-perpetrator positionings may contribute to the destabilisation of discourses which position men as always-already active agents and women as always-already passive recipients of (hetero)sex.

In this project, I have attempted to articulate such potential spaces that may be fruitful to this kind of exploration. For example, by focusing on the complexity of both marginal and more predominant narratives of sexual harassment in Chapter 6, the possibilities for resistance for a diversity of recipients afforded by these particular cultural understandings could be unpacked. More specifically, some of the narratives identified here could be conceptualised as opening up alternative possibilities for making sense of gendered/sexualised positionings in victim-perpetrator relations in constructions of sexual harassment. As a case in point, narratives such as the one entitled ‘dispersed power’ in Chapter 6, which emphasise the complexity of power relations and allow for the possibility that a range of variously positioned people can be located as recipient or initiator, could play an important role in the self-narratives of recipients who become positioned as ‘non-typical’ victims. Increasing airspace given to such narratives in both academic and popular forums may not only promote alternative ways for recipients like Joe to contextualise and problematise their experiences in a way which is preferable to them but also might contribute to the destabilisation of predominant constructions of women as victims discussed above.

An increased shift in attention to the diversity of gendered/sexualised victim-perpetrator relationship patterns is not without problems. The danger in focusing on women perpetrators of sexual harassment specifically runs the risk of

(re)producing active femininities as problematic and/or pathologised as was evident in some such constructions discussed in Chapter 9. The ways in which agentic forms femininities are positioned as variously problematic were also discussed in relation to victim-blaming discourses across Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 8 in which representations of feminised sexual subjectivities as active rather than passive are frequently used to locate women recipients as 'deviant'. Such constructions work in various ways to undermine claims that particular experiences of sexualised/gendered behaviour are a 'real' problem for the sexually agentic woman. As we have seen, the possibilities for this kind of secondary victimisation can work as a barrier for reporting sexual harassment and using grievance procedures. Thus, the kind of deconstructive project I have been suggesting in this thesis is one that must proceed with caution, occurring in a context which works towards both the legitimisation of passive masculinities as well as positive versions of active femininities.

Although this latter suggestion is not a new one in the field of sexual violence research (e.g. Fine, 1988; Gavey, 2005) I would like to suggest one other potential shift in research focus that has arisen from this project more broadly and from Chapter 7 specifically. As has been broadly argued throughout this thesis and at various points within this chapter, the construction of both women as victims of sexual harassment and as agents of social change has focused attention in a body of research as well as policy and popular accounts to the woman recipient's behaviour – how or whether they enact forms of gendered resistance, how they communicate unwelcomeness, how they deal with sexual harassment. Similarly, in Chapter 7, dealing with problematic behaviour in the personal realm centred on the recipient and was framed within feminised versions of relationship maintenance and management. More specifically, through notions of emotional labour and care, responsibility for managing unwelcomed behaviour was shifted from the initiator to the recipient which may function to displace accountability accordingly. One avenue for shifting accountability back to the initiator might lie in turning attention from how non-consent is communicated to how 'rejection' becomes performed, constructed and constituted. As illustrated in Chapter 7, the rejection of an array of gendered/sexualised behaviours is implicitly constituted as

an unpleasant experience for the initiator. It would seem that the difficulty of communicating non-consent lies not only in gendered practices around sexual consent and refusal (see, for example, Chapter 3), but also how these practices become interwoven with broader cultural notions of 'rejection' and how these issues become enmeshed in other relevant cultural expectations for behaviour, such as politeness for example. I would argue an alternative point of departure might lie in explorations of alternative meanings of rejection, how rejection and hence the rejecter can be positioned in ways other than unpleasant and 'bad'. Through such analysis, problematic gendered assumptions operating in the process of sexual refusal may become destabilised.

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## Appendix A1

### Consent form

I am a PhD student attending the University College Northampton. I am undertaking a research project that is investigating people's opinions of Sexual harassment. During this project I will be conducting a Q-sort study. The first part of this project involves conducting a pilot study. If you consent to participating in the pilot study, you will be given a form that contains a number of statements about sexual harassment. Next to each statement are four boxes labelled "agree", "disagree", "neutral" and "not clear". You will be asked to tick the most suitable box according to whether you:

1. Agree with the statement ("Agree" box)
2. Disagree with the statement ("Disagree" box)
3. Hold a neutral position with regard to a statement ("Neutral" box)
4. Find a statement to be unclear ("Not clear" box)

There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. A space is provided below each statement for comments that you might want to make about the items. For example, you may find that some statements are similar, or have ideas about sexual harassment that have not been included in the statements. Your comments would be very valuable to the project, and any suggestions. Your comments would be very valuable to the project, and any suggestions that you have would be very much appreciated. If you have any further questions please don not hesitate to contact me.

Please find my contact details below.

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I consent to being a participant in this research.....

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
1. Lewd comments about men is a form of sexual harassment				
2. Touching someone's bottom is harmless				
3. Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment				
4. A person can be sexually harassed by their partner				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
5. Sexual harassment laws have made people suspicious of each other				
6. Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexism				
7. Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment				
8. Being called "darling" can be a form of sexual harassment				
9. Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment				
10. Let's be honest! Receiving any sort of sexual attention is an ego boost				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
11. Children can sexually harass adults				
12. Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment				
13. Sexual harassment is when a person pesters you for sex				
14. Women learn to watch men watching them and become wary of what might happen next				
15. Humorous sexual remarks are harmless				
16. A person can be sexually harassed by a relative				
17. Sexual behaviour or comments from children is just naughtiness				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
18. Sexual harassment can happen anywhere				
19. People should be unafraid of voicing negative opinions about homosexuality				
20. Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment				
21. People that are offended by sexual banter are over sensitive				
22. Staring can be a form of sexual harassment				
23. Having pornographic images in the workplace is an example of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
24. Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment				
25. Sexual harassment happens over a period of time				
26. A man who calls a woman a lesbian because she refuses to date him can be a form of sexual harassment				
27. A person can be sexually harassed by a friend				
28. Feminists have made a bigger deal of sexual harassment than it really is				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
29. Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment				
30. Sexual harassment is a case of unrequited love				
31. Having a pin-up calendar on the wall at work is unacceptable				
32. A person who criticises someone's work after he or she has said no to sex is sexual harassment				
33. Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
34. A group of people can be sexually harassed				
35. Money is the main reason why people sue for sexual harassment				
36. Sexually harassment is an important issue				
37. Everyone differs in what they would call sexual harassment				
38. In this era of political correctness men can't even look at women for fear of being accused of leering				
39. An example of sexual harassment is when a person uses sexual comments or behaviour to undermine someone				
40. Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment				



Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
41. Only women can be sexually harassed				
42. Hugging can be a form of sexual harassment				
43. To say that children can sexually harass other children ridiculous				
44. I know what kind of behaviours or comments count as sexual harassment				
45. An example of sexual harassment is looking someone up and down				
46. Having hardcore pornographic pictures in the workplace is unacceptable				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
47. Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment				
48. Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment				
49. Being called “dear” can be a form of sexual harassment				
50. Women like men whistling at them				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
51. Insulting gay people because of their sexual preference can be a form of homophobia				
52. A person who puts their arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment				
53. Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment				
54. Adults can sexually harass children				
55. There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
56. A person can be sexually harassed by a work colleague				
57. Sexual harassment is a common occurrence in the lives of women				
58. One person can be sexually harassed				
59. Being called “love” can be a form of sexual harassment				
60. Sexual harassment is about using sex to get power over someone				
61. Sexual humour can make people feel uncomfortable				
62. Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
63. Sexual harassment is about the abuse of power				
64. Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment				
65. All offensive sexual behaviours or comments are worth reporting.				
66. Sexual harassment is a case of making a mountain out of a molehill				
67. Sexual harassment happens in the workplace				
68. A woman who calls a man gay because he refuses to date her can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
69. Lewd comments about women is a form of sexual harassment				
70. Sexual harassment usually occurs because one person has mistakenly thought that another person is attached to them.				
71. Women wear revealing clothes because they want to attract sexual attention.				
72. Men directing sexual comments or behaviour at other men is harmless.				
73. Sexual harassment! I wish I could get some				
74. Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
75. You should judge how serious unwanted sexual attention is by how the person on the receiving end feels				
76. Sexual banter is part of everyday life				
77. Sexual comments that offend a person is an example of sexual harassment				
78. If you find someone attractive you are bound to stare at them				
79. Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex is sexual harassment				
80. Touching someone's knee can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
81. Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment				
82. Telling gay people that they are really straight can be a form of sexual harassment				
83. Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment				
84. In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment				
85. Having someone look up and down your body can be intimidating				
86. Political correctness has created a victim culture				



Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
87. Sexual harassment can be a one off event				
88. Having pornography in the workplace is unacceptable				
89. Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment				
90. Sometimes when a person says no to a date that are just playing hard to get				
91. Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment				
92. Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment				
93. Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
94. A person can be sexually harassed by a stranger				
95. Political correctness had made people fearful of saying or doing the wrong thing				
96. The point of view of the accused is valuable when deciding whether sexual harassment has occurred.				
97. Having someone look up and down your body can make you feel uncomfortable				
98. Sexual harassment is about someone using their power to get sex				
99. Any behaviour or comment that suggests a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
100. Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment				
101. A person can be sexually harassed by an acquaintance				
102. Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment				
103. Sexual comments can make people feel uncomfortable				
104. Obscene letters can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
105. A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion can be a form of sexual harassment				
106. Invading someone's personal space is a form of sexual harassment				
107. Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment				
108. Touching a pregnant women's stomach can be a sexual act				
109. Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
110. Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment				
111. The idea of being a victim would discourage people from calling their experiences sexual harassment				
112. Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment				
113. Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex				
114. Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment				
115. Insulting gay people because of their sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
116. Sexual banter is part of everyday life				
117. A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive				
118. Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexism				
119. Suggesting that pregnant women are incapable of working can be a form of sexual harassment				
120. Sexual behaviour or comments from children can be a form of sexual harassment				
121. Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment				

Item	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
122.If a man said he had been sexually harassed he would be called a wimp				
123.Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women				
124.Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment				

## Appendix A2

### Q Response Booklet

It would be extremely useful if you could comment on the reasons for your sorting of the items or to comment on the items that you feel strongly about (e.g. those items that you least agreed/most agreed with).

1	A person is only guilty of sexual harassment if they intended to be offensive	
2	Sexual harassment is a series of incidents	
3	Treating pregnant women like invalids can be a form of sexual harassment	



4	Adults can sexually harass children	
5	Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	
6	Obscene phone calls can be a form of sexual harassment	
7	Wolf-whistling can be a form of sexual harassment	

8	Being called “dear” can be a form of sexual harassment	
9	Pestering someone for sex can be a form of sexual harassment	
10	Children can sexually harass adults	
11	Suggesting that a woman sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	
12	A boss who criticises an employee’s work after the employee has said no to sex is a form of sexual harassment	

13	Sexual comments that offend a person can be a form of sexual harassment	
14	There is a difference between sexism and sexual harassment	
15	Invading someone's personal space can be a form of sexual harassment	
16	Calling a man gay because he will not engage in manly activities can be a form of sexual harassment	
17	Sexual harassment can be about the abuse of power	
18	Beeping a car horn at someone can be a form of sexual harassment	

19	Complimenting a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	
20	Suggesting that housework is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	
21	Asking someone personal questions can be a form of sexual harassment	
22	Having pornographic images in the workplace can be a form of sexual harassment	
23	Calling a woman a lesbian because she will not engage in feminine activities can be a form of sexual harassment	

24	A boss that asks an employee to sleep with him or her in exchange for a promotion is sexual harassment	
25	The person on the receiving end should be the one who decides whether sexual harassment has occurred	
26	Any comment or behaviour that undermines a person because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	
27	Touching a person's genitals can be a form of sexual harassment	

28	Only gay people can sexually harass someone of the same sex	
29	Sexual harassment can happen anywhere	

30	Flashing can be a form of sexual harassment	
31	Hugging someone can be a form of sexual harassment	
32	Touching any part of a person's body can be a form of sexual harassment	

33	Sexual comments about men's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	
34	A person putting his or her arm around another person can be a form of sexual harassment	
35	Flirting can be mistaken for sexual harassment	



36	Being called “love” can be a form of sexual harassment	
37	Leering can be a form of sexual harassment	

38	Obscene emails can be a form of sexual harassment	
39	Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sex can be a form of sexual harassment	

40	Sexual harassment rarely has anything to do with sexual attraction	
41	Sexual comments about women's clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	

42	Staring can be a form of sexual harassment	
43	Stroking someone's back can be a form of sexual harassment	

44	Suggesting that child-care is a woman's job can be a form of sexual harassment	
45	Insulting someone by calling them gay can be a form of sexual harassment	

46	Touching someone's bottom can be a form of sexual harassment	
47	Suggesting that a man sleeps around can be a form of sexual harassment	

48	Being called “darling” can be a form of sexual harassment	
----	---	--

49	Touching someone’s knee can be a form of sexual harassment	
----	--	--

50	Negative comments about a person's looks can be a form of sexual harassment	
51	Telling sexual jokes can be a form of sexual harassment	



52	Suggesting that women should wear feminine clothes can be a form of sexual harassment	
53	Repeatedly asking someone out for a date can be a form of sexual harassment	

54	Touching someone's hand can be a form of sexual harassment	
55	comment or behaviour that suggests that a person is immature can be a form of sexual harassment	

56	Friendliness can be mistaken for sexual harassment	
57	Sexual harassment! Don't be ridiculous! It's only natural for men to make a pass at women	
58	Touching a pregnant woman's stomach can be a form of sexual harassment	

59	You can only call an incident sexual harassment when sexual comments or behaviour are aimed at a person	
60	In this era of political correctness it is all too easy for innocent remarks to be misunderstood as sexual harassment	
61	Touching a woman's breasts can be a form of sexual harassment	

62	Excluding a person from an activity because of his or her sexual preference can be a form of sexual harassment	
----	--	--

**Other comments or observations:**

## Appendix A3

### *Q study on sexual harassment*

#### Instructions for participating in the study

Enclosed you should find the following:

- **Q Grid**
- Envelop containing **Q Items** (cut-up statements)
- Envelop containing a set of **Markers** (going from +6 to 0 to -6)
- **Q Response Booklet**
- SAE to return the materials

*Please read through the instructions before you begin, as you will find the task more 'user-friendly' once you have.*

The following instructions will explain how to complete the Q sort.

## **The Q Grid**

What you need to know is that doing a Q sort takes space. You will need a large table, some floor space or similar. Begin the Q sort by taking the **Markers** out of the appropriately marked envelope. Place these in front of you at the bottom of your workspace like this:

<b>-6</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(9)	(10)	(9)	(7)	(6)	(5)	(3)	(2)

Make sure you leave plenty of space above. Now look at the **Q Grid** and you will see that these markers make up the base of that grid. The numbers in brackets (bottom line) tell you the number of items that should be placed above each marker. So, for example, you should place the two statements that you **MOST AGREE** with above the +6 and the two which you **LEAST AGREE** above the -6.

Now open up the envelope marked **Q Items**. Usually the easiest way to start is to divide up the items into three piles:

<p><i>These items are</i></p> <p><i>the ones I least</i></p> <p><i>agree with</i></p>	<p><i>I neither agree or least</i></p> <p><i>agree with these or I</i></p> <p><i>find these items not</i></p> <p><i>relevant</i></p>	<p><i>These items are</i></p> <p><i>the ones that I</i></p> <p><i>agree with</i></p>
---	--	--

When you have done this, work on each pile separately. For example, starting with the right hand pile, choose the two that most strongly agree with from the 'agree' pile and put them in +6. Go through the pile allocating items as you go. You can move the items around as much as you like - your original +6s could end up as +3s or even lower. Then, do the 'least agree' pile in the same way. Finally, fill in the centre with the 'undecided' pile. Shuffle the items around until you feel reasonably happy with the overall pattern.

The second thing to remember is that this technique is good for finding overall patterns, but it is not very good for getting at very precise ideas. So, you should



not spend too long pondering over choice - which one of two statements to put in +3, for example, and which in +4. Obviously, it is best if you think carefully about your sorting, but there is no need for you to get bogged down and it should not demand too much of your time. So, please, do settle for a reasonable estimate and leave it at that. I would suggest that when you find issues are raised or distinctions are difficult to draw, you write notes about these in the **Q Response Booklet**.

When you have finished the Q sort you should have the items arranged exactly as the grid. To complete the **Q Grid** the last thing you need to do is write in the number of the items. For example, if you chose statements 38 and 61 for the **+6**, then you should enter 38 and 61 in the spaces above **+6** in the grid. *Please do make sure you follow the grid exactly.* It might be helpful if you cross out the numbers below the grid as you write them in, that way you will know what statements you have already used. Again, if you find you want to add any comments or observations, please do so in the **Q Response Booklet**.

### **Q Response Booklet**

When you have finished filling in the **Q Grid**, you should turn to the **Q Response Booklet**. The main purpose of this is for you to give information that might help to interpret the patterns that emerge. What would be particularly useful is for you to fill in the space beside every item saying how and why you placed it where you did or making any other comment you think might be relevant. However, this would require a fair amount of time, so I would appreciate it if you would try to give comments, at least, for those items that come up on the extreme ends of the grid or which you found especially difficult to place.

### **Returning the materials**

When you have finished, all you need to do is return the following in the enclosed SAE with:

1. The filled in **Q Grid**.
2. The completed **Q Response Booklet**.

Thank you once again for helping with my research. I very much appreciate it.

Lisa Lazard

Department of Psychology

**University College Northampton**

## Appendix A4

### Q grid

													(8)													
											(7)		(7)													
									(6)				(6)													
							(5)						(5)													
					(4)									(4)												
			(3)											(3)												
		(2)												(2)												
<b>-6</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+6</b>														

**Least Agree**

**Most Agree**

You might find it helpful to cross out the numbers as you write them in the grid:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13   14   15   16   17   18   19   20  
 21   22   23   24   25   26   27   28   29   30   31   32   33   34   35   36   37   38   39   40  
 41   42   43   44   45   46   47   48   49   50   51   52   53   54   55   56   57   58   59   60  
 61   62

## Appendix A5

### Table of Factor Loadings for Q Study 1

	Component									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
P29	.876	.227	.151	5.696E-02	.185	-.320	-.049	-.097	5.779E-02	-.062
P9	.790	.125	.327	5.733E-02	3.937E-02	3.548E-02	.164	3.100E-02	.188	-.002
P19	.716	2.700E-02	-.299	-.012	3.408E-02	.264	-.021	.205	.190	.129
P32	.673	.342	5.304E-02	.209	9.144E-03	.146	.314	.166	-.016	-.056
P28	.578	5.025E-02	.413	.148	8.320E-03	-.015	.482	-.027	.162	.183
P30	.571	.217	.459	7.840E-02	.160	.385	-.248	.103	4.957E-02	-.012
P41	.566	.149	.133	.257	9.908E-02	.542	-.086	.170	5.586E-02	-.071
P20	.484	.469	.152	.155	5.929E-02	.233	4.246E-02	.162	-.102	.190
P34	5.350E-02	.779	.209	.195	9.282E-02	9.383E-02	.232	8.730E-03	.245	-.003
P27	.201	.747	.175	.144	1.534E-02	.193	7.653E-02	-.076	.237	.142
P40	.276	.662	.181	.223	.266	-.097	8.658E-02	.124	.245	-.039
P43	.460	.639	.313	9.352E-02	.104	4.062E-02	.309	1.469E-02	-.118	-.084
P2	8.446E-02	.592	8.372E-02	.398	.267	7.627E-02	.296	-.160	-.183	.000
P10	.482	.567	6.878E-02	6.998E-02	.285	-.020	-.188	2.292E-02	.260	-.046
P18	.229	.521	4.359E-02	.295	.381	.136	-.052	.324	-.175	.232
P33	.418	.466	.118	.196	.267	.335	.216	.103	-.020	-.239
P5	-.057	.448	.207	.350	-.007	.417	9.842E-02	.245	1.580E-02	.218
P42	.242	.418	.264	.193	.252	.211	.210	-.252	.117	-.396
P16	.374	.411	.393	-.021	.331	.210	.258	.176	4.583E-02	-.090
P14	.289	.398	.366	.287	.146	.211	-.227	.283	.138	7.397E-03
P17	8.069E-02	.265	.815	4.509E-02	7.743E-02	2.899E-02	-.023	-.028	3.541E-02	-.156
P24	-.003	.133	.773	9.155E-02	-.032	.212	8.469E-02	-.004	.185	1.344E-02
P36	.433	.132	.637	.202	.110	-.071	.132	.118	-.046	-.066
P25	.462	.107	.563	.264	8.699E-02	6.505E-02	.173	-.102	4.756E-03	-.170
P31	.110	.219	.131	.707	3.476E-02	1.858E-02	.259	.125	.122	2.139E-02
P13	.126	.190	.153	.702	.292	.171	-.112	.193	6.952E-02	-.191
P22	.107	.324	.234	.568	.253	.262	.180	9.260E-02	4.125E-03	.157
P23	.364	.281	.121	.516	6.213E-02	.216	.224	.121	.374	-.006
P1	.489	.216	-.015	.515	.264	.202	-.121	-.394	.116	-.004
P39	.132	.293	-.159	9.419E-02	.692	.175	.121	.247	9.412E-03	-.058
P21	.132	.143	.298	.244	.625	.140	.160	-.042	5.878E-03	3.430E-02
P4	-.141	6.902E-02	.160	.318	.543	.104	-.061	-.227	.174	.445
P26	-.453	-.089	-.054	-.042	.517	-.278	-.064	-.281	-.255	-.291
P7	5.291E-03	.106	.113	.128	.178	.818	.162	-.024	-.043	8.183E-02
P11	.280	7.406E-02	7.838E-02	8.287E-02	.170	.654	5.614E-02	.272	.344	-.008
P3	6.132E-03	.322	8.028E-02	.108	.128	.144	.643	8.233E-02	.136	.173
P15	.271	.127	-.019	.340	.380	.433	.486	.109	-.009	.123
P38	-.066	.344	.399	.381	.253	.141	.401	.186	-.073	-.087
P37	.305	.340	.316	.208	.368	3.463E-02	.400	1.050E-04	.230	.274
P8	.166	5.299E-02	9.626E-03	.269	.142	.216	.102	.791	5.810E-02	4.686E-03
P12	.261	.402	.170	.174	2.999E-02	6.851E-02	7.721E-02	1.833E-02	.664	.165
P6	.309	.156	.160	.145	.404	.169	.341	5.878E-03	.493	-.280
P35	4.987E-02	8.501E-02	-.226	-.049	8.077E-02	8.461E-02	.187	1.903E-02	2.940E-02	.736

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

## **Appendix A6**

### **Consent Form**

I am a postgraduate student at the University college Northampton. I am conducting a Q study which will investigate people's understandings of sexual harassment. If you agree to participate in this research you have the right to withdraw during the study. You can also request that your final contribution be withdrawn up to seven days after you have taken part in the study. Your identity will not be revealed in the research. If you agree to participate in this research please sign below.

I agree to participate in this research.....

**If you have any further questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are provided below:**

Work number: 01604 735500 (ext 2490)

Email: [lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk)

## Appendix B1

### Consent form

I am a PhD student attending the University College Northampton. I am undertaking a research project that is investigating people's opinions regarding how sexual harassment should be dealt with. The first part of this project involves conducting a pilot study. If you consent to participating in the pilot study, you will be given a form that contains a number of statements about how sexual harassment could be dealt with. Next to each statement are four boxes labelled "agree", "disagree", "neutral" and "not clear". You will be asked to tick the most suitable box according to whether you:

1. Agree with the statement ("Agree" box)
2. Disagree with the statement ("Disagree" box)
3. Hold a neutral position with regard to a statement ("Neutral" box)
4. Find a statement to be unclear ("Not clear" box)

There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me. Please find my contact details below.

### Contact details

Lisa Lazard  
University College Northampton  
Park Campus  
Boughton Green Road  
Northampton

### Telephone numbers

Work: 01604 735500 (ext 2490)

### Email

[lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk)

I consent to being a participant in this research.....

### **Pilot study**

Please read the statements below and tick the most suitable box according to whether you:

- 1) Agree with the statement (Agree box)
- 2) Disagree with the statement (Disagree box)
- 3) Hold a neutral position with regard to the statement (Neutral box)
- 4) Find the statement to be unclear (Not clear box)

There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. A space is provided at the end of this form for comments that you may want to make about these statements. For example, you may find that some statements are similar. Or have ideas about this topics that have not been included in the statements.

Your comments would be very valuable to the project and any suggestions that you have would be very much appreciated.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
1) Sexual harassment should be a criminal offence	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2) Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3) A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4) The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5) The courts should take steps to protect the recipient of sexual harassment.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6) The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]



	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
7) Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
8) A person who is found guilty of workplace sexual harassment should be denied promotion opportunities	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
9) There should be specialist organizations that provide support to those who have been sexual harassed	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
10) The government should provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
11) The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
12) The government should explain to everyone how they can make a sexual harassment complaint	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]
13) Everyone should be provided with training on how to deal with	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]	[ <input type="checkbox"/> ]

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Not Clear
sexual harassment				
14) Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15) People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
16) Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
17) Staff should be supportive of an employee who has made a sexual harassment complaint	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
18) Employers who knew about and failed to stop workplace	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
sexual harassment should be held legally responsible				
19) Sexual harassment complaints should be taken seriously	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
20) Employers should explain to staff how to make a sexual harassment complaint	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
21) Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
22) The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
23) Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
24) Employers who were unaware of workplace sexual	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
harassment should be held legally responsible				
25) The courts should concerned with the protection of the recipient of sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
26) Sexual harassment companies should be investigated fully	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
27) Sexual harassment cases should only be pursued if the initiator intentionally set out to harm the recipient	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
28) It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
29) Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
30) Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
31) People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves [ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
32) There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment in the workplace [ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
33) Employers should assure that a person complaining of sexual harassment is treated sympathetically by all staff [ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
34) The courts should be concerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment [ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
35) People should be sympathetic to recipients of sexual harassment [ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
36) An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked [ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
37) Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
38) The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be kept secret	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
40) The police should deal with sexual harassment cases	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
41) A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
42) A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counseling	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
43) Less serious complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
44) A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
45) A person found guilty of sexual harassment should be allowed to appeal	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
46) Compensation is the incentive for complaining about sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
47) Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
48) The police should take in to account the recipients' past sexual behaviour	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
49) Courts should consider whether a reasonable person would have found behaviours to be sexually harassing	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
50) People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
51) The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
52) There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
53) People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
54) Sexual harassment laws have create a victim culture	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
55) The police should treat recipients of sexual harassment sympathetically	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]



	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
56) One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
57) The police should be given training for dealing with recipients of sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
58) Police questioning of the recipient of sexual harassment should be non-threatening	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
59) There is a need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
60) People who make false complaints about sexual harassment should be arrested	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
61) Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
62) People that witness sexual harassment should report it	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
63) The police should deal with sexual harassment that happens in the home	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
64) One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
65) Recipients of sexual harassment that happens in the home should report it	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
66) The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
67) Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Clear</b>
sexual harassment				
68) Sexual harassment is a serious issue	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
69) The recipient's word is not enough for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
70) Recipients of sexual harassment that happens in public places should report it	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
71) People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
72) Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
73) The police should deal with sexual harassment that happens	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

**Agree**

**Disagree**

**Neutral**

**Not Clear**

in public places

**Comments**

**Appendix B2**  
**Q Response Booklet**

It would be extremely useful if you could comment on the reason for your sorting of the items or to comment on the items that you feel strongly about (e.g. those items that you least agreed/most agreed with).

1	I feel that making sexual harassment a criminal offence if taking things too far	
2	Injunctions are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	
3	A person who breaches a sexual harassment injunction should be arrested	
4	The authorities should only get involved if sexual harassment occurred on more than one occasion	
5	The courts should not be responsible for providing protection for recipients of sexual harassment	

6	The police are powerless to stop sexual harassment	
7	Fines are a good way to stop sexual harassment	
8	It is unfair to deny promotion opportunities to those found guilty of sexual harassment	
9	There should be specialist organisations that provide support to those who have been sexually harassed	
10	It should not be the government's responsibility to provide training on how to deal with sexual harassment	
11	The courts are powerless to stop sexual harassment	

12	Everyone should be made aware of how they can make a sexual harassment complaint	
13	I feel that providing everyone with training on how to deal with sexual harassment is unnecessary	
14	Prison sentences are a good way to deal with sexual harassment	
15	People who have made a sexual harassment complaint should be protected from negative comments about their actions	
16	Recipients of sexual harassment should receive practical support	
17	Employers should be held legally responsible for workplace sexual harassment whether they knew about it or not	

18	Sexual harassment complaints should be taken with a grain of salt	
19	Those who complain about sexual harassment should be protected against retaliation by the accused	
20	The recipient should ask the initiator of sexual harassment to stop	
21	Verbal warnings from the police are a good way of stopping sexual harassment	
22	It is far too difficult to prove that sexual harassment occurred	
23	Laws about sexual harassment are unnecessary	



24	Verbal warnings from an employer is a good way of stopping sexual harassment	
25	People should learn to deal with sexual harassment themselves	
26	There is no need for protection against sexual harassment in the workplace	
27	The courts should be unconcerned with the rights of the person accused of sexual harassment	
28	People should be sympathetic to individuals who claim that they have been sexually harassed	
29	An employee who is found guilty of sexual harassment should be sacked	

30	Investigating sexual harassment cases is a misuse of police time	
31	The identity of the person making a complaint about sexual harassment should be revealed	
32	Sexual harassment cases should be dealt with by the police	
33	A person who deliberately makes a false complaint about sexual harassment should be punished	
34	A good way to stop sexual harassment is to make sure that the guilty party receives counselling	
35	All complaints of sexual harassment should be referred to the authorities	

36	A person's motives for complaining about sexual harassment should be checked	
37	Recipients of sexual harassment should be given compensation	
38	The police should take in to account the recipient's past sexual behaviour	
39	People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by the police	
40	The identity of the person accused of sexual harassment should be kept secret	
41	There is need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in public places	

42	People are adequately protected from sexual harassment by employers	
43	One should intervene if they suspect their partner is being sexually harassed	
44	There is no need to provide the police with specific training for dealing with sexual harassment cases	
45	The police should question recipients of sexual harassment in a sensitive manner	
46	There is no need for specific protection against sexual harassment that happens in the home	
47	Recipients of sexual harassment should be allowed to request that a same sex police officer deals with their case	

48	People that witness sexual harassment should report it	
49	Sexual harassment that happens in the home is better dealt with privately	
50	One should intervene if they suspect that their friend is being sexually harassed	
51	Occurrences of sexual harassment in the home should be reported	
52	The police should take steps to make sure that recipients of sexual harassment are questioned in a non-threatening environment	
53	Recipients should not be victimised for complaining about sexual harassment	

54	Sexual harassment is a minor issue	
55	The recipient's word is insufficient cause for a sexual harassment complaint to be pursued	
56	Sexual harassment that happens in a public place should be reported	
57	People should be sympathetic to those accused of sexual harassment	
58	Dealing with sexual harassment cases is a misuse of employers' time	
59	Sexual harassment in public places should be dealt with by the police	

60	The government should provide instructions on how to make a sexual harassment complaint	
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## Appendix B3

## Q grid

[illegible]

You might find it helpful to cross out the numbers as you write them in the grid:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60



## Appendix B4

### Table of Factor Loadings for Q Study 2

					Component				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
P4	.790	.230	9.782E-03	-8.558E-03	.158	9.941E-02	.107	1.656E-02	-.130
P27	.784	-2.847E-02	.105	.321	-9.591E-02	-9.673E-02	-5.226E-02	9.300E-02	-.116
P43	.693	.366	.206	-5.871E-02	.267	.289	-5.184E-02	-.120	-7.967E-02
P3	.635	.429	.237	.186	.240	.175	.174	2.708E-02	.111
P22	.633	.158	.460	.118	.210	-4.235E-02	5.283E-02	.184	7.169E-02
P36	.632	.391	.273	.279	-.131	.258	8.359E-02	-4.188E-02	5.987E-02
P45	.618	.318	.342	.215	8.546E-02	-4.538E-02	9.156E-02	1.386E-02	.253
P23	.617	.533	9.641E-02	6.724E-02	8.686E-02	4.129E-02	3.031E-02	-.150	.111
P5	.587	.359	.105	-2.590E-03	.521	-1.274E-02	.126	.142	2.969E-02
P25	.586	.247	.420	.302	9.478E-02	.178	4.730E-02	-4.032E-02	.172
P1	.571	2.241E-03	-3.868E-02	-3.673E-02	.284	-.293	-.107	.419	-.254
P32	.556	.488	.303	.292	-5.007E-03	.171	.149	.208	-1.551E-02
P26	.548	.364	.184	5.736E-02	-.261	.202	.331	2.488E-02	.315
P44	.538	.397	.192	.186	-.141	.163	-.198	9.209E-02	.327
P34	.504	.458	.189	.213	9.874E-02	.152	.121	1.153E-02	.258
P28	.501	.389	.265	.199	.107	.495	-8.572E-02	7.960E-02	.178
P38	.467	.455	.288	.365	-9.461E-02	.151	.266	-.161	4.052E-02
P29	.463	.296	.375	6.882E-02	.161	.348	.346	-.231	-.146
P19	.460	.360	.171	.273	3.204E-02	-1.628E-02	.326	-2.040E-02	.194
P9	.138	.802	.169	2.465E-02	-3.066E-02	.285	-.135	.102	.136
P8	.241	.715	.355	.164	-3.474E-03	-2.467E-02	.107	-.124	2.983E-02
P12	.337	.688	4.945E-02	.348	-3.389E-02	5.380E-02	-5.591E-02	-.106	-8.048E-03
P35	.295	.635	.315	.136	.104	-.187	.146	-.306	5.623E-02
P7	.340	.615	.193	.167	9.364E-02	.366	.266	.152	1.323E-02
P17	-3.335E-02	.569	.398	.121	-1.146E-02	-6.127E-02	.120	9.438E-03	.346
P14	.369	.545	5.523E-02	.292	.118	.236	.237	-6.934E-02	.220
P24	.418	.494	.454	6.705E-02	.239	.160	.132	7.335E-02	1.892E-02
P30	.420	.483	.346	6.809E-02	.319	-6.512E-02	-6.574E-02	-.429	-.179
P21	.140	.320	.733	-9.671E-02	4.500E-02	3.935E-02	-8.590E-02	-.246	4.178E-02
P10	.121	9.513E-02	.666	.153	.232	.230	-.105	6.146E-02	-.151
P15	.462	.140	.562	.369	-.138	8.318E-02	5.289E-02	.103	.128
P37	.176	.326	.541	.224	-.185	.158	.333	-8.323E-02	.230
P42	.336	.470	.540	-1.898E-02	-1.714E-03	-.202	.136	3.631E-02	.120
P40	.440	.447	.520	9.917E-02	2.916E-02	.304	.117	7.191E-02	.146
P41	.474	.408	.509	.166	-9.671E-03	.244	9.996E-02	-.201	.150
P6	.288	.409	.433	.278	.269	.167	3.3038E-02	.261	-.132
P16	8.313E-02	.236	.257	.701	-9.250E-02	-8.123E-03	.208	-.181	.134
P20	.309	.226	-8.755E-02	.651	.324	.136	.143	5.466E-02	7.387E-03
P11	.369	.282	.249	.511	.133	.194	-.269	.274	-.215
P39	4.184E-02	-3.682E-02	6.534E-02	4.322E-02	.893	7.333E-02	-1.223E-02	3.540E-04	.163
P33	.439	-3.540E-02	.410	.107	.468	-.100	-.169	.233	2.259E-02
P18	4.206E-02	6.942E-02	.106	6.395E-02	2.502E-02	.822	.196	-8.250E-02	4.438E-02
P13	-5.434E-02	-6.018E-02	3.360E-02	-.136	1.130E-02	-.176	-.847	-8.240E-02	.127
P2	.108	-4.539E-02	-1.238E-02	-3.369E-02	6.271E-02	-5.709E-02	6.698E-02	.875	6.558E-02
P31	2.095E-02	.189	1.624E-02	1.975E-02	.197	6.167E-02	-.127	-.102	.885

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

## **Appendix B5**

### **Consent Form**

I am a postgraduate student at the University college Northampton. I am conducting a Q study which will investigate how people think sexual harassment should be dealt with. If you agree to participate in this research you have the right to withdraw during the study. You can also request that your final contribution be withdrawn up to seven days after you have taken part in the study. Your identity will not be revealed in the research. If you agree to participate in this research please sign below.

I agree to participate in this research.....

**If you have any further questions or queries please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are provided below:**

Work number: 01604 735500 (ext 2490)

Email: [lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk)

## **Appendix C1**

### **Interview Questions**

1. What does the phrase unwanted sexual attention mean to you?
2. Are there are forms of unwanted sexual attention that are more serious than others?
3. What leads someone to give unwanted sexual attention to someone else?
4. What's the best way of dealing with it?

## Appendix C2

### Consent form

I am a PhD student attending the university college Northampton. I am undertaking a research project that is investigating unwanted sexual attention. To explore this topic I am conducting interviews. During the interview you will be asked about your thoughts and opinions about unwanted sexual attention. The interview will be tape-recorded. The tape recordings will be written down word for word and extracts from the interviews will be used in my research project. I will ensure that your identity will not be revealed in this work. Given that this might be a sensitive issue, there is no pressure whatsoever for you to agree to participate in this research. Do not participate unless you feel completely comfortable in doing so. If you agree to participate and at a later stage you do not want to be involved in the research, you have every right to withdraw from the study. If you have participated in the research decide you no longer wish for your contribution to be included in the final project, you can withdraw your contribution up to seven days after the interview has taken place and ask for it to be destroyed. You also have every right to be present when your contribution is destroyed.

### Contact details

Lisa Lazard  
University College Northampton  
Park Campus  
Boughton Green Road  
Northampton

### Telephone Numbers

Work: 01604 735500 (ext 2490)

### Email

[lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.lazard@northampton.ac.uk)

I consent to being a participant in this research.....

## Appendix C3

### Transcription Notation

<i>Symbols</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Bold</b>	Emphasis
(.)	Pause
[info]	Description of paralinguistic and situational information
?	Indicative of speakers intonation
Xxx	Untranscribable